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A syncretistic theory of depiction

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(Article begins on next page)



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A Syncretistic Theory of Depiction

For Betta, who doesn't turn out well in pictures

Contents

Preface

Part One – What is Alive and what is Dead in Previous Theories of Depiction

Chapter I - Depictions aka Pictures, i.e., Pictorial Representations

1. *Depictions, or Pictures*
2. *The Syncretistic Approach*

Chapter II - Semiotic Theories of Depiction

1. *Goodman's Theory*
2. *Kulvicki's Theory*

Chapter III - Resemblance Theories of Depiction

1. *Objective Resemblance Theories: the Simple and Fancy Versions*
2. *Objective Resemblance Theories: the Sophisticated and Real Versions*
3. *Subjective Resemblance Theories: the 'Double Experience' - Versions*
4. *Subjective Resemblance Theories: the 'Experience of Similarity' - Versions*

Chapter IV - Seeing-in, Seeing-as, Recognition and Make-Believe Theories of Depiction

1. *Wollheim's Theory of Seeing-in*
2. *Gombrich's Theory of Seeing-as*
3. *Seeing-in Includes Seeing-as*
4. *Is Seeing-in Necessary for Figurativity?(I)*
5. *The Recognitional Theory*
6. *Is Seeing-in Necessary for Figurativity?(II)*
7. *Where Are We Now?*

Chapter V – More on Seeing-in

1. *The Nature of Seeing-in*
2. *The Content of the Recognitional Fold is the Picture's Figurative Content*
3. *The Content of Seeing-in*

4. *The Mode of Seeing-in*

Part Two – The Syncretistic Theory

Chapter VI - The Syncretistic Theory: A General Survey

1. *Grouping Properties*
2. *The Emergence of the Known Illusion*
3. *The Conceptual Character of the Recognitional Fold*
4. *Objective Resemblance Comes Back from the Rear Door*
5. *The Core of the Syncretistic Theory*

Chapter VII - Applications, Consequences and Integrations of the Theory

1. *Depiction and Sculptures*
2. *Actual or Counterfactual Resemblance*
3. *Pictures in Other Sensory Modalities*

Chapter VIII – Defending the Syncretistic Theory

1. *Is the Syncretistic Theory Correct?*
2. *The Adequacy Conditions*
3. *Impossible Pictures?*

Bibliography

Preface

From the very early days of its culturalization, mankind has surrounded itself with pictures. It is likely that humans began noting certain natural phenomena that are putatively endowed with a figurative value (footprints, shadows, water reflections) which they later attempted to imitate, ultimately producing pictorial representations of the world.

Evidence that things may have gone this way comes from developmental psychology, provided of course that ontogenesis recaps phylogenesis. Newborn babies first recognize the mere figurative value of pictures – they discern something in them – and then proceed to use them as pictures, i.e., as representations in a figurative mode, in order to understand how the world so represented may be.

As for archeological data, the oldest two-dimensional pictures (putting sculptures aside) we have at our disposal most likely date back 32.000 years. As Cutting and Massironi originally remarked, “the antiquity and ubiquity of pictures suggest the ability to understand pictures is deeply embedded in the human mind” (1998:138). Written languages seem unquestionably to be posterior; as Ludwig Wittgenstein famously reminded us in the *Tractatus*, alphabetical languages are evolutions of hieroglyphic writing, whose essence, he said, is pictorial. Of course, it sounds controversial that language itself arose later than picturing; it is not unlikely that humans started speaking before pictures emerged. Yet independently of genetic hypotheses regarding the relationship between pictures and language, it seems indisputable that in some sense or another, pictorial representations constitute a different sort of representation than non-pictorial ones. Though differently reconceived, this intuition has been shared throughout our history by most of those who, from Plato onwards, have theorized on this matter. On the basis of such an intuition, an urgency in contemporary times has possessed philosophers to define again depiction, or put alternatively, to redefine what makes a picture a representation of a particular kind, a pictorial representation, i.e., a representation in a figurative mode. In the last forty years

or so, a glorious and permanent theme in philosophy, depiction, has indeed blossomed again by becoming the target of a very intense and sophisticated debate, especially (but not exclusively) in the English-speaking philosophical community and in the analytic tradition of philosophy at large.

In this book, I will attempt to protract this flourishing revival of depiction by stressing that what distinguishes pictures from other representations that are admittedly as public as pictures is primarily their mode of being representations, i.e., the figurative mode. On the one hand, in order to stress this point, the book will try to single out what figurativity consists of. In order to grasp the mark of figurativity, in this book I will methodologically steer away from the great masterpieces of our artistic tradition, and, instead, focus on the borderline cases where figurativity either arises or makes the item it applies to pictorially peculiar. Therefore, in this book I will discuss at length cases like nominal silhouettes, stick figures, ‘aspect dawning’- pictures, and ambiguous pictures. For I am convinced that these kinds of pictures reveal the mark of figurativity. In this respect, the great masterpieces are simply more complicated and admittedly exceedingly more beautiful instances of the same kind of things that the humble pictures I have just mentioned instantiate.

On the other hand, as to their being representations, pictures are, basically, artefacts that are ascribed a certain content which makes them assessable as to their correctness or incorrectness, or in other terms, as to their truth and falsity. As we will see, this does not mean *eo ipso* that they are representations in the very same sense as other public non-pictorial representations. Yet the similarities in representational power between pictures and other representations are certainly more conspicuous than their differences.

By assessing depiction as what combines the intentionality of a representation with its figurativity, I will try to take account of the main approaches that have been previously taken in relation to this concern within this longstanding debate. For I am not only convinced that, since these approaches have not managed to yield a thoroughly successful understanding of the phenomenon in question, a new theory on depiction is needed, but also that such a theory cannot but be developed by preserving the merits of

the previous theories while eradicating their defects. This is why this theory is a *syncretistic* theory of depiction. Perhaps this is the most sensible assessment of depiction one can expect in these ‘hellenistic’ times of our Western culture which is slowly fading towards its end, as Oswald Spengler asserted in his *The Decline of the West*. In this respect, depiction is not the only theme that in my mind must be considered from a syncretistic perspective; fiction is one, too (as demonstrated in my previous book *How Ficta Follow Fiction. A Syncretistic Account of Fictional Entities*, Springer, Dordrecht 2006).

It is not surprising, therefore, that following a presentation of the main themes and the general approach to the issue of depiction (chap I), the first part of this book is devoted to the assessment of what is alive and what is dead (here I mimic what the Italian philosopher Benedetto Croce said *à propos* of Hegel’s philosophy) in previous theories of depiction: the semiotic theory (chap. II), the resemblance theories of depiction, both in their objective and in their subjective versions (chap. III), the seeing-in theory along with the illusionist theory and the recognitional theory (chaps. IV-V). In turn, the second part of the book presents the theory in its whole articulation (chap. VI) along with some of its possible applications and consequences (chap. VII), ultimately concluding with a final assessment of its adequacy (chap. VIII).

This book is the re-elaboration of certain claims I originally defended in a paper, “Toward A Syncretistic Theory of Depiction”, which came out in 2012 in a collected volume edited by Clotilde Calabi for this very publisher, *Perceptual Illusions. Philosophical and Psychological Essays*. Though in an utterly different form, the book also re-comprises seminal ideas that have appeared in some additional papers of mine in the last years, namely “How to Reconcile Seeing-As with Seeing-In (with Mimetic Purposes in Mind)”, in G. Currie, P. Kot’atko, M. Pokorny (eds.), *Mimesis: Metaphysics, Cognition, Pragmatics*, College Publications, London 2012, “Defiction?”, in C. Barbero, M. Ferraris, A. Voltolini (eds.), *From Fictionalism to Realism*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle upon Tyne, 2013, “The Content of a Seeing-As Experience”, *Aisthesis* 6 (2013), “Why, As Responsible for Figurativity, Seeing-in Can Only Be Inflected Seeing-in”, *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* (2014),

and “How Picture Perception Defies Cognitive Impenetrability”, in A. Reboul (ed.), *Mind, Values and Metaphysics. Philosophical Essays in Honor of Kevin Mulligan - Volume 2*, Springer, Dordrecht 2014, 221-234. Last but not least, the claims made in this book constitute the underlying thread that unifies my opinionated introduction to depiction, which I recently published in Italian (*Immagine*, Il Mulino, Bologna 2013).

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As depiction is the theme of research that has mainly occupied my mind in the last years, there are many people I would like to thank for having helped me throughout this time both in extending my comprehension of the theme and in discussing my own ideas on it: Ben Blumson, Robert Briscoe, Clotilde Calabi, Roberto Casati, Robert Hopkins, John Kulvicki, Dominic Lopes, Paolo Leonardi, Diego Marconi, Patrick Maynard, Kevin Mulligan, Bence Nanay, Marco Nani, Paolo Spinicci, Denys Vinçon and Kendall Walton. I have also greatly benefited from the insightful remarks I got from people that read different chapters of the book: John Hyman, Pietro Kobau, Elisabetta Sacchi, Fiora Salis, Marco Santambrogio and Enrico Terrone. In particular, I owe a special thanks to my MA student Giulia Martina who read the entire manuscript and offered me numerous important comments and suggestions. With the cooperation of Marco Nani, moreover, Paola Tosti hugely helped me with some of the book's figures representing some original artworks of her own.

Finally, a special thanks goes to my friend Marco Vacchetti, who has allowed me to use a copy of his painting *Madonna and Child* as the book cover. I think that this painting appropriately illustrates the basic claims of the book, namely that the figurative content of a picture is retrieved from the silhouettes one perceptually groups in it (in this case, two distinct human-like silhouettes), while its pictorial content is determined by the selection one can (conventionally) induce from its figurative content (in this case, via the various writings scattered throughout the painting itself). In this respect, the main difference between Vacchetti's painting and the multitude of 'Madonna and Child'- paintings of the medieval tradition merely amounts to the fact that its figurative content is more generic than that of the latter paintings.

Needless to say, appealing to syncretism does not weaken my responsibility for the theses I defend in the book, so no one but me is to blame if I do not succeed in standing on the shoulders of giants.

PART ONE**WHAT IS ALIVE AND WHAT IS DEAD IN PREVIOUS THEORIES OF DEPICTION****Chapter I****Depictions aka Pictures, i.e., Pictorial Representations***5. Depictions, or Pictures*

This book mainly deals with *depictions* or *pictures*, i.e., the figurative images which result from the combination of a typically material object, the picture's *vehicle*, with what provides a picture with its representational content, the picture's *subject*. As I have just said, I claim that the vehicle is typically a material object. For I not only welcome the possibility that the vehicle is an optical effect generated via light refraction, as in the case of stereoscopes whose lenses generate a single image out of two physical separate images that respectively depict left-eye and right-eye views of the same scene. I also want to allow for cases in which the vehicle is the outcome of hitting a certain reflecting surface with some light rays, as in the case of mirrors, or of spotting a certain area with some light, as in the case of holograms. By "picture's subject" I mean the picture's representational content, which comes in two varieties: either a *singular* content yielding what that picture is a picture of, a *particular* subject – what makes a picture the picture of a given individual, as in the case of portraits or snapshots –¹ or a *general* content providing the picture with a *generic* subject – what makes a picture the picture of some *F* or other, as with genre pictures or stick figures.

Put this way, pictures are just a subset of images as a whole.² As to images in general, some people think that there is a theoretical reason as to why pictures are such a subset.³ Yet some other people tend to think that, as regards a picture, sharing the characteristic of being an image with other things is for a picture an empty commonality.⁴ Although I am sympathetic with this latter group of people,⁵ I do not wish to expand my analysis on this concern any further. For the time being I simply wish to remark that *qua figurative* images, pictures are immediately to be contrasted

with *non-figurative* images, those images that have no figurative value insofar as no further item, let alone a scene, can be discerned in them. At first, one might be tempted to classify under non-figurative images all the so-called *abstract* images, a label that generically includes paintings as diverse as, for instance, Paul Klee's *Abstract Trio*, a composition of three human-like silhouettes, and his dissimilar *Static-Dynamic Gradation*, a mere array of differently colored parallelepipeds.

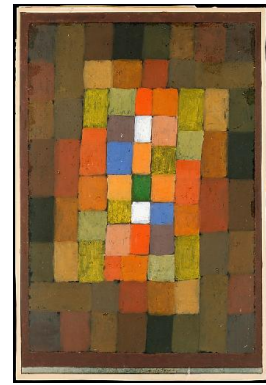
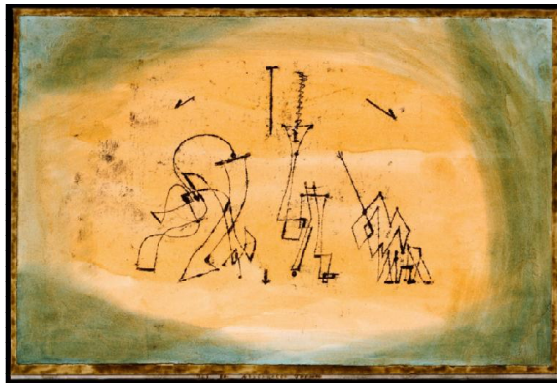


Figure 1.1 Paul Klee, *Abstract Trio*, 1923; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York - The Berggruen Klee Collection, 1984

Figure 1.2 Paul Klee, *Static-Dynamic Gradation*, 1923; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York - The Berggruen Klee Collection, 1987

Yet this temptation would be incorrect. For some so-called abstract paintings are *eo ipso* figurative insofar as some items can be discerned in them, or at least in parts of them (this may well be the case with the first, but not with the second, Klee painting). As Richard Wollheim masterly claimed, in some (if not most) abstract paintings we can at least trace figure/ground relationships between items effectively located in a space that is not our actual space, the space where we locate the picture's vehicle: an apparent or pictorial space, as he sometimes calls it.⁶ Accordingly, these paintings somehow present a scene where particular items interact, as standard figurative images paradigmatically do. As a result, figurative images merely contrast with truly abstract paintings, which are the only genuine non-figurative images insofar as no item can be discerned in them.

Moreover, within the category of figurative images, I will focus on those that are also *representations*, insofar as their having a subject allows them to be about individuals or to have a given content, whether singular or general, that makes them assessable with respect to their correctness – they present faithful or unfaithful portrayals of the world. Now, insofar as figurative images are also representations, their being figurative makes them representations of a particular kind – that is, *pictorial* representations, as people often say. Unlike e.g. verbal signs, which are representations as well, pictorial representations represent things in a specific way, precisely a way that makes them figurative images. Therefore, pictorial representations are figurative images that represent, or, to put it alternatively, they are representations in a pictorial, i.e., figurative, way. This is why it is appropriate that they be designated by the term “picture”, or analogously, that they be called *depictions*, to use the standard expression: depictions are representations that represent something in a pictorial way, or, to put it alternatively, that are also figurative images.

Once one approaches the question of depiction this way, it becomes immediately manifest that there are two necessary and jointly sufficient conditions in order for something to be a depiction. Roughly, a given entity is a depiction if and only if i) it is the representation of something, its subject (it is about something or it has a certain content, whether singular or general) and ii) it has a certain figurative value (it enables one to discern something in it).

From this rough definition it can be clearly deduced not only that being a representation is not enough in order for something to be a depiction – verbal signs represent yet they do not depict at all – but also, and perhaps more interestingly, that there may well be figurative images that are not depictions. To be sure, they share with depictions what makes the latter possess a figurative value: one is able to discern something in them. Yet since they represent nothing they are not figurative images at all. In other words, non-representational entities may well have a figurative value.⁷

So-called natural, or better yet, accidental images are prototypical examples of this latter situation. While observing the uneven surface of planet Mars, we might get the impression that we are seeing a human face in some of its rocks.⁸ Thus, one such

rock surely has a figurative impact on us. Yet it is not a picture of a face. (It is not coincidental that, in order to justify a contrary claim, one would have to postulate such a rock to have been modelled by Martians or at least to have undergone a certain causal influence by human faces.) The same predicament holds true with cracks in marble shaped as the faces of bearded kings or walls shaped as battle scenes, as Leon Battista Alberti and Leonardo da Vinci (among others) famously reminded us.⁹ Although cracks and walls are definitely not pictures of humans or battles respectively, humans and battles do respectively determine their figurative value, insofar as these things can be discerned in them.

Yet this rough definition still fails to tell us how the idea that depictions represent things in a pictorial, i.e., figurative, way can be spelled out. As we will see, to provide a thorough analysis of this definition is one of the main aims of this book: throughout the course of it, an increasingly refined analysis of the definition will be provided. For the time being, I simply say that there are at least two general ways of providing a precisification of such a definition. According to a *minimalist* reading, the definition must be taken literally, as providing two utterly explanatorily independent conditions. As a result, when investigating depictions *qua* representations of a particular kind, the pictorial kind, one may well already assume what representations are in general in order to simply focus on what distinguishes depictions from other kinds of representations, that is, in order to merely understand the pictorial way of representing. Alternatively, according to a *maximalist* reading, understanding what depictions are also involves to understand in what sense they represent something, so that no prior analysis of representation can be presupposed.¹⁰

The approach I will pursue here would appear to be minimalist. For, by wondering what it means for a depiction to be a representation that represents something in a pictorial way, I already presuppose the standard understanding of what it means for something to be a representation. In other words, first of all, as with any other representation, the fact that depictions have a subject makes them entities endowed with *intentionality*, in the standard sense that they either are about something or have a kind of content that makes them assessable as to their correctness. Indeed, as we have already

seen, for a depiction to have a subject amounts either to be about something, or to represent either that that very something has a certain property or that there is some *F* or other.¹¹ Moreover, with regard to depictions the two aforementioned cases in which the notion of intentionality articulates itself,¹² i.e., having aboutness, *intentionality of reference*, and having a given content that is assessable for its accuracy, *intentionality of content*, are qualified according to how they are typically understood in the literature on representations.¹³ Let me expand on this.

On the one hand, intentionality of reference is qualified by a) the possible non-existence and b) the possible aspectuality of what the representation is about, i.e., what is standardly called its *intentional object*. According to a), there may well be both representations of intentional objects that exist and representations of intentional objects that do not exist. According to b), such intentional objects may well turn out to be aspects of something else, so that one may recognize that a certain intentional object and another intentional object are just two aspects of one and the same thing.¹⁴ In this context, I use the expression “intentional object” in an ontologically neutral sense. An intentional object is simply the target of a representation. Any given representation is about something, independently of whether, in the overall domain of what there is, there really is something that representation is about. To be sure, a certain intentional object will decidedly be in our ontology provided we are committed to the kind of entities to which that object belongs; but not otherwise. So for instance, if I am representing Silvio Berlusconi, who is a person, and we accept persons in our ontology, then Berlusconi will be an intentional object that decidedly figures into the overall domain of what there is. Yet if I am representing Berlusconi’s super-ego, which is a gaseous psychic entity (by “gaseous psychic entity” I mean an entity that is postulated in a psychological theory only in order for the theory to accommodate psychological data), and we do not accept gaseous psychic entities in our ontology, then that super-ego will be an intentional object that does not figure into the overall domain of what there is.¹⁵ Now, *qua* representations, depictions are affected by both a) and b). First of all, in addition to having pictures of Loch Ness, which certainly exists, one may also have paintings of Nessie, the non-existent Loch Ness monster. Moreover, one may also have pictures of

Phosphorus, the famous morning star, and pictures of Hesperus, the famous evening star, which are nothing but the planet Venus itself.

Intentionality of content, on the other hand, is qualified not only by a) and b) but also in terms of c) the possible incorrectness of such a content, i.e., the fact that there may well be representations with content that are correct representations of the world as well as representations that do not represent the world correctly.¹⁶ Again, *qua* representations, figurative images are affected by c) as well. Not only are there true pictures of Silvio Berlusconi using the sign of the horns gesture at a EU meeting, but there are also paintings representing him incorrectly, e.g. caricatures showing him as being shorter than he actually is.

Yet my apparently minimalist approach does not deny that the particular way in which a depiction represents (the figurative way) has an impact on its representational power. For, as I will stress in chap. VI (as well as in this very chapter), I uphold, along with many others, that the figurativity of a picture puts some constraints on the subject that picture may have, hence on its content. I will first defend the idea that what gives a figurative image its figurative value provides that picture with a *figurative* content. In the following chapters we will see what a figurative content effectively is; intuitively speaking, it amounts to whatever can be discerned in a picture. Certainly, this figurative content is not the content of a picture that I have been speaking of all along when referring to the picture's subject, namely, the *representational* content of that picture. For it is unquestionably broader than the latter: what a picture is about or what makes it assessable for accuracy is not whatever can be discerned in it. Nevertheless, as I will also claim, the representational content of a picture is just a selection (we will see later in what form) of its figurative content. Put differently, the subject of a picture is just one of all the candidates that, given its figurative content, that picture may have as its subject. Its figurative content forces that picture to have one of those candidates as its subject, hence to have a representational content that is possible for it. The subject the picture really has, hence its real representational content, is what results from a selection on this concern. From now on, I will call the representational content of a picture, insofar as it is constrained by its figurative content, the picture's *pictorial* content.

To be sure, nothing precludes an entity with a certain figurative content from being treated as having a subject that is not among the candidates its figurative content allows it to have. Yet in this case that entity would not be a *depiction* of that additional subject. Rather, it would be a mere representation of it, just as a verbal sign may be; it would thus have a representational content that is not a pictorial content. Put alternatively, its having a figurative content allows that entity to satisfy the above condition ii), the entity's having a certain figurative value, just as accidental images do. To be sure, that entity may be moreover understood as a representation of something, and, accordingly, as having a certain representational content. Yet since that something is not among the candidates that its figurative content allows that entity to have *qua* its pictorial content, that entity would not be a depiction of that very something; that representational content would not be a pictorial content for that entity. Therefore, that entity's satisfaction of condition i) in order for it to be a depiction, i.e., the condition of being the representation of something, would merely appear to be such.

To better appreciate this point, let us first consider a painting, Piero della Francesca's fresco portraying the bishop of Toulouse St. Louis, now housed in Sansepolcro, Tuscany. Unquestionably, the bishop of Toulouse is the subject of that picture; that painting is about St. Louis. Yet let us suppose that someone, unaware of the fact that the picture is a famous Quattrocento painting, were struck by a similarity between that portrait and the famous F1 pilot Michael Schumacher, so as to take that picture for a portrait of Schumacher. Now clearly, that person would be wrong by taking the picture in such a way: that picture, as we know, is a painting of St. Louis. Yet that interpretation would be justified insofar as one can discern St. Louis as well as Schumacher in Piero's fresco. As a matter of fact, the picture might have had Schumacher as its subject, if things had gone differently (for instance, if the painting had been dug out of the ground where it had been buried for centuries and nobody had realized that it was made in the Quattrocento). For that painting's figurative content allows it to be not only a picture of St. Louis, but also a picture of Schumacher. In other words, although the fresco's pictorial content involves St. Louis, it might have involved Schumacher as well.



Figure 1.3 Piero della Francesca, *Saint Louis of Toulouse*, 1455-60; Pinacoteca comunale di Sansepolcro, Italy - Wikimedia Commons, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:426px-San_Luigi_di_Toulouse_PieroDellaFrancesca.jpg

In the case of Piero's fresco, the picture actually has only one subject. But there may be other cases in which, given a certain figurative content, we ascribe one and the same picture different subjects compatible with such a content. Let me pretend that the following picture is a snapshot of Madonna from when she played the part of Evita Peron in Alan Parker's *Evita*. While watching the movie, that picture is a picture of Evita. Yet if we look at the picture independently of the movie, it is just a snapshot of Madonna. In other words, that picture has a certain pictorial content involving Madonna, as well as another such content yet involving Evita.



Figure 1.4 Madonna / Evita Peron (by courtesy of Paola Tosti)

Now let us imagine instead that someone decided to treat Piero's fresco as if it were about Alpha Centauri. (We might imagine them saying "let's suppose that *this* [pointing to Piero's painting] is Alpha".) One may certainly do so, and create a new *representation* of Alpha by making that painting a proxy of Alpha. Yet by doing so the painting would not be transformed into a *depiction* of Alpha. For this time the painting's figurative content prevents it from being a depiction of Alpha: the constellation cannot be discerned in it. Therefore, although Piero's painting is a depiction of St. Louis, it may simply count as a mere representation of Alpha Centauri just as the English expression "Alpha Centauri" is. In other words, while the fresco might have had a representational content involving Alpha, it does not have that content as its pictorial content. We would be in the same predicament if we were to treat the aforementioned Martian rock in which we see a human face as though it were about the present constellation. True enough, insofar as we see a face in it, the rock has a figurative value that amounts to a certain figurative content. Yet although that rock would be about Alpha because of our treatment of it, it could not be a depiction of Alpha. For such a figurative content would prevent it from having Alpha among its proper representational candidates. The rock would therefore have a representational content involving Alpha that would not be a pictorial content for it.¹⁷

The examples I have offered are of the constraining relationship between the figurative and pictorial content of a picture in which the latter amounts to a *singular* content, insofar as the picture is about a particular individual. Yet the same holds true when the pictorial content is *general*. Let us consider a sketch in which a human face can be discerned, such as one drawn by a child. In accordance with additional ways of taking that sketch, it may be treated as a picture of a man as well as a picture of a woman, or as a picture of a young human as well as a picture of an old human. Yet it cannot be treated as a picture of a dinosaur, even if it may be used as merely representing the prehistoric animal.¹⁸

In my mind, there are various reasons as to why the two conditions of depiction, the first concerning the intentionality of a figurative image, the second concerning its figurativity, have not to be utterly independent of each other, insofar as the latter

condition puts a constraint on how the former condition must be satisfied. First of all, claiming such an independence implausibly allows for there to be pictures of any subject whatsoever. Secondly, and related to the first point, that claim does not manage to account for a difference between things that are depicted by pictures *qua* their subjects and things that pictures merely symbolize. Let us see these points in detail.

To start with, intuitively, we can linguistically refer to numbers, taken as the paradigmatic case of abstract entities (provided of course that we allow for numbers in our ontology), but we cannot depict them. Can there be pictures, say, of the number Three? This is hard to swallow. What would such a picture look like? Yet if what accounts for the figurativity of a picture and what accounts for its intentionality were completely unrelated, one would have to allow for depictions of *abstracta*, and therefore of the number Three as well.

A defender of strict minimalism would reply by merely stressing that, in point of fact, there are many pictures of this sort. Is not Eugène Delacroix's *Liberty Leading the People* one of the many examples of this? That famous painting is about Liberty, which is an abstract idea. That painting has a figurative value that puts no constraint whatsoever on its representative content. If Delacroix had decided to call his painting "Lust Dominates Humans", no one might have prevented him from doing so; the painting would simply have had another representational content.



Figure 1.5 Eugène Delacroix, *Liberty Leading the People*, 1830; Musée du Louvre, Paris – ARTStor Collection, Art, Archaeology and Architecture (Erich Lessing Culture and Fine Arts Archives)

Yet there is an obvious rejoinder to such a reply. While contemplating Delacroix's painting, one merely discerns the silhouette of a gracious woman; furthermore, that woman *symbolizes* Liberty. So, if that painting is a depiction, it is not a depiction of this abstract idea; *qua* the symbolic value of the painting, this idea is what that painting only represents not *qua* depiction, but as a mere representation. This idea therefore involves a mere representational content for this painting. Instead, Delacroix's painting is a depiction of *another* representational content, the pictorial content that its figurative content allows it to have.¹⁹

The strict minimalist might further retort that in such a case it is not clear what the alleged pictorial content of the painting bound by its figurative content really is. If Delacroix's painting does not depict Liberty, it does not depict a gracious woman either, who at most contributes to articulate its figurative value.

To be sure, I think that also in such a case we can distinguish among the following things: a) a figurative content – one can discern a female silhouette in Delacroix's painting – b) a pictorial content bound by that figurative content – a white 19th century woman – and a further symbolic value of the painting assigning it a mere representational content – the one involving Liberty, again.

Let us suppose however that the above 'strict minimalist' retort is correct, for there might be cases in which a figurative content may only be matched by another content that it does not bind (consider e.g. cases in which a logo of a fish is used to mean Jesus Christ). Yet an opponent of strict minimalism may well counterreply that the above match only holds true for some specific examples, which have to be treated as cases in which something that has a mere figurative content (the fish feature, in this last example) is also a non-pictorial representation of the representational content it symbolizes (Jesus Christ, in the same example).²⁰ At the same time, that opponent may well go on to argue that there are plenty of other cases in which we definitely distinguish between the pictorial content of a picture and its symbolic value that amounts to a mere representational content for it, whereby the former content is bound, while the latter content is unbound, by the figurative content of the picture. Let us consider e.g. Paolo Veronese's *Unfaithfulness*, a painting belonging to his four

Allegories of Love housed in the National Gallery in London. That painting depicts (among other things) a naked woman attracted by one, but not by the other, of the two gentlemen she finds herself in the midst of: a subject that the figurative content of that painting – comprised of a trio of humans, two men and a woman – binds it to have as its pictorial content. Moreover, the painting also symbolizes the abstract idea of infidelity. Such a distinction between a pictorial content that is bound by the figurative content of the picture and its additional symbolic value *qua* its mere representational content is fundamental in order for us to understand such a picture. If the figurative content of a picture did not induce such a constraint, we could well say that Veronese's painting depicts infidelity, which is clearly not the case. As a result, this counterreply points out a further drawback of strict minimalism, namely that it forces one to withdraw the distinction between the pictorial content and the symbolic value of a picture, which is very important to our understanding and evaluation of pictures.



Figure 1.6 Paolo Veronese, *Unfaithfulness*, about 1575; The National Gallery, London - ARTstor Collection, The National Gallery, London

So, I claim that the figurative content of a depiction puts a constraint on its proper representational content, i.e., its pictorial content. To be sure, this claim is not enough in order for me to endorse a maximalist approach. Here, the way in which pictures are figurative does not bring about a new way in which they are representational entities, so that we must understand what their figurativity consists of in order to properly understand their representational character. Nevertheless, such a claim opens the

possibility that pictorial representations do not completely fulfill the aforementioned traditional criteria of intentionality.

Just to provide an example, the criterion of the possible non-existence of an intentional object also allows for representations of impossible entities, entities that not only do not actually exist, but might not have existed either. Now, there can certainly be mental representations of impossible entities: I can now think of an impossible wooden cannon made out of steel.²¹ There can also be verbal representations of such entities: I may just name this impossible cannon “Twardy”. Yet, although we may well accept pictures of entities that do not actually exist spatiotemporally, as in the aforementioned case of the Nessie paintings, as I will try to show in chap. VIII it is quite debatable whether there are impossible depictions, i.e., depictions whose pictorial content is an impossibility, insofar as it involves something that not only does not actually exist, but also might not have existed at all: e.g. not only a picture of Twardy, but also a picture of the so-called Penrose triangle, a solid whose sides cannot match, as what is in the forefront is at the same time in the background and *vice versa*.

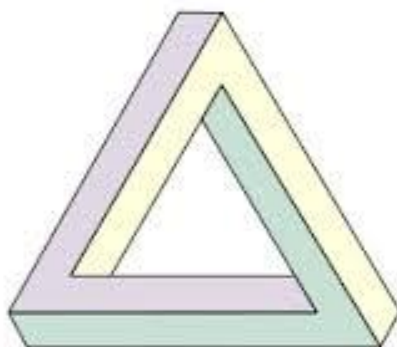


Figure 1.7 The Penrose triangle

Quite likely, if it turned out that there were no such depictions, this would be because the figurative content cannot be constituted by an impossible entity, nor can it be the subject of a depiction. Can impossibilities be discerned in a picture? More interestingly for my present purposes, this predicament would prevent depictions from being

representations that completely fulfil the same criteria that other representations – mental, verbal representations – fulfill.

All in all, although my account of the figurativity of a pictorial representation narrows down the representational content that such a picture may have as a *pictorial* representation, it does not force the picture to be a representation in an entirely different sense from that of non-pictorial representations. Thus, my account still leans towards a minimalist rather than a maximalist approach: let us consider it as a *loosely minimalist* approach.

I will now proceed to briefly consider how this point can be taken into account by outlining how, throughout the course of this book, this loosely minimalist approach will be developed into a *syncretistic* approach to the issue of depiction.

6. *The Syncretistic Approach*

In this book, I wish to defend a *syncretistic* approach to the issue of depiction. A syncretistic approach acknowledges that, their differences notwithstanding, most if not all of the already existing approaches to this issue still have a valuable theoretical import. Each approach has its own merit. While some of its claims are to be discarded, others are to be preserved, so as to rearrange them together with additional claims from other approaches.

To date, there are two main paradigms according to which the approaches to depiction must be ranked.²² On the one hand, there is a minoritarian paradigm, the so-called *semiotic* or *structuralist* paradigm. According to this paradigm, depictions are representations that belong to a specific representational system, whose specificity accounts for their being representations of a particular kind. Goodman (1968) and Kulvicki (2006) are the main representatives of this theoretical group. On the other hand, there is the majoritarian paradigm, the *perceptualist* paradigm, according to which either perceptually relevant properties or perceptually relevant mental states are crucial in order to understand how depictions are a pictorial kind of representation. Conceived as such, this second theoretical group is so broad that it covers an array of theories. In

the first half of this group, we find the *objective resemblance theories*, namely the doctrines according to which a picture is a depiction of its subject (if and) only if it resembles that subject, where resemblance occurs between perceivably graspable properties of the picture's vehicle and analogous properties of the picture's subject respectively.²³ In the second half of the group, we first have the *subjective resemblance theories*, which interpret the relevant resemblance as occurring not between the vehicle and the subject, but either between the *experiences* of them (Peacocke 1987, Budd 2004) or as concerning the way the picture's vehicle is experienced: a picture is a depiction of its subject only if its vehicle is experienced *as* similar (in the relevant respect) to that subject (Hopkins 1998). Moreover, *illusion theories* differently claim that a picture depicts something insofar as it leads its perceiver to seemingly see its subject.²⁴ The *seeing-in theory* (Wollheim 1980²), rather, maintains that the relevant experiential factor is the *sui generis* experience of seeing the subject *in* the picture. *Make-believe theories* (Walton 1990) try to interpret this *sui generis* experience as a complex experience involving both perception and imagination. Finally, in an attempt to delve deeper in order to better understand what grounds this seeing-in experience, *recognition theories* (Schier 1986, Lopes 1996) maintain that a picture depicts its subject only if it tracks the very same recognitional ability people activate when faced with that subject.²⁵

Although these two paradigms are very different, and there are various positions within the perceptualist paradigm itself, the syncretist believes that at least many of the above theories can somehow be reconciled by disregarding many of their elements, while retaining others and arranging them in a new way. I will end this chapter by giving an overview as to how such a recombination may work in light of the previous discussion of minimalist and maximalist approaches to depiction.

To begin with, semioticians rightly stress the conventional factor linking a picture with its subject, in particular when the subject is the object the picture is about. Since, as we have seen, this factor affects the intentionality of a picture, the point to be preserved from this approach is that, as with any other representation, the intentionality of a picture cannot be accounted for in terms of the resemblance between the picture's

vehicle and its subject. For – as the later Wittgenstein (2009⁴) masterly pointed out – resemblance is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition of intentionality. Rather, the intentionality of a picture has to do with a negotiation that involves both the picture’s creator and its audience.

An immediate problem with this position is that it apparently rules out the fact that, over and above conventionality, there is a further factor that may link a representation with its object, namely a *natural* relation (typically, a causally-based relation). For semioticians *à la* Goodman, no such natural relation holds true for representations in general, or at least for pictorial representations. Yet in the latter case there are many figurative images whose relation with the objects they are about is causally based, the so-called *transparent* pictures: photos – still or moving –, footprints, mirrors, etc.).

Yet, as we will see in the next chapter, one may easily amend the semiotic approach by saying that what the existence of transparent pictures proves is simply that the intentionality of a figurative image is not always a matter of convention, but also a matter of causation. This perfectly matches the idea, endorsed by semioticians, that depictions are like any other representation. In general, having intentionality is a property that a representation can possess in at least two different ways: either as an *ascribed* feature, superimposed on a representation by another party – *derived* intentionality – or as a feature that a representation *naturally* possesses without any such superimposition – *original* intentionality.²⁶ Depictions abide by this general distinction by being separated into those whose intentionality is derived – *opaque* pictures – and those whose intentionality is original – transparent pictures.

Yet the real problem for semioticians is something else. Semioticians are strictly minimalist insofar as they cannot maintain that the intentional object of a picture is selected among a series of legitimate candidates, independently of how that object is determined (i.e., conventionally or causally). For their criteria of figurativity (on which I shall focus in the next chapter) do not place any restrictions on this concern. To them, their definitions strictly agree with the way the aforementioned rough definition is articulated. They indeed provide definitions of depiction in terms of two utterly *disjoint*

necessary (and jointly sufficient) conditions: to them, what accounts for the figurativity of the picture and what accounts for its intentionality are two utterly different things. Yet, as we have seen, there are various reasons as to why this strict minimalism is incorrect.

With all their variations, perceptualists have no such problem. No matter how they conceive what accounts for a picture's figurativity, within the analysis of being a depiction, the figurativity factor puts a constraint on the further factor of the intentionality of a picture, hence on what that picture ultimately depicts.²⁷ Moreover, that factor is interpreted in perceptualist terms: the figurativity of a picture has to do with what may be perceived by means of it. To recall a slogan from Alberti that Robert Hopkins approvingly quotes as a *desideratum* that every theory of depiction must account for, in some sense or another every perceptualist accepts that "the painter is concerned solely with representing what can be seen"²⁸, or better yet – in order not to jeopardize the possibility of modally non-visual pictures (auditory pictures, tactile pictures, etc.: cf. on them chap. VII) – what can be perceived. Put in the most general terms, a possible world without perceivers is a pictureless world. More specifically, a perceptual ability must be mobilized in determining the figurative value of a picture, hence in establishing what the picture can represent. As a result, perceptualists have a reason as to why, say, the number Three cannot be depicted, along with any other *abstractum*. For that number cannot be perceived, in any plausible sense of the term.²⁹

Of course, perceptualists are divided as to how exactly they understand the perceptualist terms in which the figurative constraint is formulated. Their different understandings follow from the different ways each perceptualist accounts for the picture's figurativity.

By interpreting minimalism loosely, the syncretist follows in the footsteps of the perceptualists regarding that general concern. As I said before, whether it be due to conventional or causal factors, for the syncretist a picture's intentionality is determined by a selection of the legitimate candidates that the figurative content of the picture allows it to have as its subject. In other terms, the figurative content of a picture forces that picture to have, *qua* its pictorial content, a representational content that is

compatible with that figurative content. Of all the compatible representational contents, the content that picture has as its real pictorial content depends on the negotiation that governs such a selection. Now, the particular account the syncretist provides of the picture's figurativity determines how, for the syncretist, the figurative content of a picture exercises its constraining role on the picture's representational powers. As we will briefly see below, such an account allows the syncretist to combine the best elements she finds from the various perceptualist approaches.

Looking ahead, for the syncretist a picture's figurativity is established by what one can see in it, in the sense of the twofold mental state of seeing-in postulated by Wollheim (1980², 1987, 1998).³⁰ According to Wollheim, seeing-in is a mental state constituted by two inseparable folds, a *configurational* fold devoted to the perception of the picture's vehicle and a *recognitional* fold leading to the apprehension of the picture's subject. Yet the syncretist acknowledges that what the folds of such a state exactly are and how they are intertwined is a matter that requires elaboration, one elaboration that Wollheim refrained from providing. Such an elaboration will have to describe, firstly, what kind of content such mental folds respectively have, secondly, how such contents are related, and thirdly, what kind of mental states those folds are.

In the course of this elaboration, we will firstly find that the recognitional fold amounts to apprehending not the pictorial content of the picture, but rather its broader figurative content that, as we have seen, puts some constraints on the previous content. Yet secondly, that figurative content in turn depends on the content the configurational fold actually possesses.

Beyond the forms and colors of the picture's vehicle, a seeing-in entertainer grasps some of its additional properties in the configurational fold; namely, some of its *grouping properties*, the properties of some elements in an array of being arranged in a certain way. Such properties are responsible not only for what we can see in a picture via the recognitional fold of the seeing-in state, but also for the fact that what we see in the picture via that fold emerges in the picture itself – it is what 'dawns upon' the seeing-in entertainer.

Thus, this grasping of grouping properties precisely shows why the recognitional fold cannot float free of the configurational fold, by implausibly allowing the seeing-in entertainer to see in the picture whatever she likes or imagines. Instead, as I just hinted at, the content of the recognitional fold is to be bound by the content of the configurational fold; more precisely, what is recognized in the recognitional fold depends on which grouping properties of the vehicle are grasped in the configurational fold. To return to a previous example, in the recognitional fold of the seeing-in state concerning Piero's fresco we can see St. Louis as well as Michael Schumacher in that fresco, for in the configurational fold of that seeing-in state concerning the vehicle of that fresco one perceptually grasps some 'human-like' configurations. Yet we cannot see Alpha Centauri in that fresco, for within the very same configurational fold we do not perceptually grasp 'starry-like' configurations in such a vehicle.

In addition, Wollheim's idea that a mental state of seeing-in has a properly perceptual nature can be justified by the syncretist. Moreover, such a justification allows the syncretist to reevaluate at one and the same time the merits of both the illusionistic theories and the recognitional theories of depiction, by eradicating their defects.

To begin with, not only is the configurational fold of that state the genuine perception of all the relevant properties of the picture's vehicle, including grouping properties. But the apprehension of the figurative content that constitutes the recognitional fold of that state also has a perceptual nature. For it consists in knowingly illusorily seeing the picture's vehicle as the items that constitute such a figurative content, so that its experiencer essentially has an experience as of such items (for details, cf. chaps V, VI, and VII). Turning to Piero's painting once more, the fact that one can see St. Louis as well as Schumacher in it shows that the recognitional fold of that seeing-in state consists in knowingly illusorily seeing that painting as a human male of a certain kind, so that its experiencer essentially has an experience as of such a human male.

Let me briefly unpack this last idea. First, in accordance with the recognitionalists the syncretist will stress that the recognitional fold definitely has a recognitional import: it allows the seeing-in entertainer to recognize items in the picture

as she would if she were to see those items face to face. The seeing-in entertainer can recognize both St. Louis and Schumacher in Piero's painting as she essentially would have done if she had seen those individuals face to face. But second, in accordance with the illusionists the syncretist will also say that, insofar as that fold is a seeing-as experience, that recognition is illusory, for there are no such items in front of the seeing-in entertainer. Such an individual is seeing neither St. Louis nor Schumacher, for she is merely facing Piero's painting. Yet third, as only some enlightened illusionists may accept, the syncretist will maintain that such a misrecognition is knowingly illusory. For, insofar as she knowingly perceives the picture's vehicle, the seeing-in entertainer also knows that the items she sees in the picture are not around, for the above knowledge prevents her from having a feeling of presence as to those items. Thus, she is not fooled by her illusorily seeing that vehicle as such items. By knowing that she is facing Piero's fresco, the seeing-in entertainer is not fooled by her illusorily seeing the picture as St. Louis or, equivalently, as Schumacher. She definitely sees that fresco as St. Louis or, equivalently, as Schumacher, yet because she also knows that she sees that fresco, she feels that neither of the two are there.

As a final result, since the picture's vehicle shares the relevant grouping properties with the picture's subject, the syncretist has the opportunity to partially reevaluate objective resemblance theories of depiction. In fact for the syncretist, the necessary condition of depiction that accounts for the figurativity of a picture involves the fact that the picture's vehicle and the picture's subject are similar under a certain respect, i.e., under some grouping properties. More precisely, such a likeness occurs between the vehicle and the subject from a certain perspective (or many such perspectives).

Chapter II

Semiotic Theories of Depiction

1. Goodman's Theory

A structural, or *semiotic*,³¹ theory of depiction such as the one originally defended by Nelson Goodman in his (1968) is primarily characterized by two main claims, one that concerns the *intentionality* of a picture, the other that concerns its *figurativity*. Let me start with the first claim.

To begin, as to what concerns the intentionality of a pictorial representation, the semiotic theory claims that it is, basically, a matter of convention. In this respect, there is nothing that distinguishes a pictorial from a non-pictorial representation such as e.g. a verbal sign. Pictorial or not, there is nothing in the representation itself that tells us what the subject of that representation is, i.e., what it is about or its representational content as a whole. One can further interpret Goodman as saying that, in both representational cases, the pictorial and the non-pictorial, there are, basically, two species of representation, *relational* ones – representations that designate something in particular – and *non-relational* ones – representations that simply have a generic representational content, representations of some *F* or other.³² Yet one cannot read off from the relevant representation what that representation designates or what its generic content is, respectively. There is no intrinsic property of the representation that may help us in this respect. For what that representation designates as well what generic content it has utterly is just the outcome of convention.³³

As far as verbal signs are concerned, this claim may easily be accepted. With the exception perhaps of Plato in the *Cratylus*, no one has ever maintained that verbal signs wear their meaning on their sleeve, as it were. But the claim may be striking as far as pictorial representations are concerned. For a naïve view on this matter says that such representations have the subject they have just in case they resemble it, i.e., they share some properties with it. Yet as I stated in the previous chapter, by focusing on mental images Wittgenstein (2009⁴) shows that this view is mistaken for representations in

general. In the same vein, Goodman maintains that the naïve view is untenable even for mere pictorial representations.³⁴

Let us consider, for example, the name “Napoleon” and Jacques-Louis David’s painting *Napoleon Crossing the Alps*. Both are about Napoleon and therefore are relational representations. The name stands for the great French emperor, for we have so agreed. As Saul Kripke famously noted, nothing would have prevented us from changing our minds and letting the name stand for our favourite aardwark.³⁵ So far, so good. Yet for the semiotician the painting also designates Napoleon simply because we have so agreed, in accordance with David’s own intentions. There is nothing in the painting itself that makes it stand for Napoleon rather than any other individual. No alleged similarity between the painting and the emperor could have brought about this result.



Figure 2.1 Jacques-Louis David, *Bonaparte Crossing the Great Saint Bernard Pass*, 1801; Malmaison (Rueil-Malmaison, France) - ARTstor Collection. Art, Archaeology and Architecture (Erich Lessing Culture and Fine Arts Archives)

Let us consider now both the phrase “a vessel meets a whale at sea” and Joseph Turner’s painting *Whalers*. Neither is a relational representation, for there is no individual either representation stands for – the phrase is an indefinite description that has no reference whatsoever, while the painting is a so-called genre picture that presents some vessel or other meeting some whale or other at sea. Each representation is a representation endowed with a generic content,³⁶ or, as Goodman puts it in order to

stress their non-representational character, it is a representation-of-a-vessel(-meeting-a-whale-at-sea).³⁷ Yet for the semiotician, once again, not even this content can be read off from the expression or the painting, but rather it is ascribed to both representations by way of our conventions.



Figure 2.2 Joseph Turner, *Whalers*, around 1845; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York - Wikigallery.org, http://www.wikigallery.org/wiki/painting_241430/Joseph-Mallord-William-Turner/Whalers

As I anticipated in the previous chapter, however, as far as pictorial representations are concerned, conventionality does not seem to be a necessary condition of their intentionality. Let us consider so-called *transparent* pictures, those whose subject is said to be *seen through* the picture, as if the picture were merely a lens or a glass that lets the subject appear through it – to repeat: photos – still or moving –, footprints, mirror-images, and so on. These pictures are such that their relation with the objects they are about is causally, not conventionally, based. If I try to take a picture of my partner and a pidgeon passes in front of the lens, completely blocking my partner when I click the shutter, the photo I am left with is of the pidgeon, not of my partner. For what has left its trace in my representational device is the pidgeon, not my partner.

To be sure, this is only a problem for semioticians if transparent pictures are claimed to be the same kind of entities as opaque pictures, those pictures whose relation with their objects is not causal (paintings, drawings, sketches, etc.); that is to say, only if both transparent and opaque pictures are simply species of pictures as a whole.

Although this claim is contestable,³⁸ I (along with others)³⁹ find it to be correct, due to the reason I will immediately provide below. I therefore believe it is up to a semiotician to provide an answer to this problem. First of all, however, let me explain why I think that there is no principled distinction between transparent and opaque pictures.

For one thing, if it turned out that the object a picture is about is not the causal origin of that picture, we would still take that picture to be about that object, although the picture would no longer be a transparent but rather an opaque one. Suppose for instance that we were to discover (if we have not yet discovered it) that the Holy Shroud of Turin is not a footprint that has been formed via its causal contact with Christ's body, but is merely a medieval painting of Christ. What would change in such a situation is the way in which Christ comes to be the subject of that picture, a conventional rather than a causal way, but not the fact that it is its subject.

Moreover, nothing substantial would change if, instead, it turned out that the Shroud is indeed a footprint, however not of Christ but of a hitherto unknown man. The figurative content of the Shroud allows it to be, in different contexts, both (what has been discovered to be) an opaque picture of Christ and a transparent picture of that unknown man. In the previous chapter, we have already encountered a similar situation. In the context of watching Alan Parker's *Evita*, a snapshot of the popstar Madonna functions as a picture of Evita Peron; caused by Madonna, the snapshot has no causal relationship with Evita. Therefore, in different contexts one and the same item may be a transparent picture of Madonna and an opaque picture of Evita.⁴⁰ The opposite may also occur, when one and the same item works as a transparent picture of a certain subject within a filmic context and as an opaque picture of another subject outside of that context. This holds particularly true in the case of pornographic movies, in which while watching the movie one witnesses the deeds the real actors perform rather than those of the (fictional) characters such actors play.⁴¹

Finally, let us consider examples of *perceptually ambiguous* pictures. Insofar as it supports two different interpretations – Madonna; Evita – the aforementioned picture may be considered ambiguous as well. Yet such an ambiguity has no perceptual import: no phenomenological switch occurs in discerning Madonna rather than Evita in it. Is

ambiguity is merely representational. Perceptually ambiguous pictures, rather, are those figures that support at least two *perceptually relevant* readings, namely different readings that follow a phenomenological switch concerning the perception of the relevant figure: the picture is seen first in one way and then in another. Conceptually speaking, these perceptual readings of the picture occur prior to the pictorial interpretations one can give of it. This is paradigmatically the case with Joseph Jastrow's 'duck-rabbit'- picture, which can be taken either as the picture of a duck or as the picture of a rabbit insofar as one can see it either duckwise or rabbitwise.

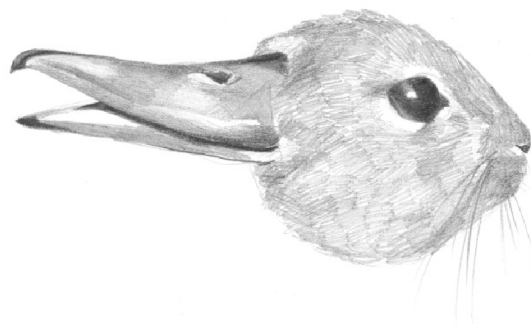


Figure 2.3 duck-rabbit (by courtesy of Viola D'Orazio)

I will deal with the phenomenon of perceptually ambiguous pictures more in detail later (chaps. IV, V and VI). For the time being, let me just remark that for some of these pictures one of their visually relevant readings makes them transparent pictures, while another of such readings makes them opaque pictures. In one of the most amusing examples of this, we take a figure as a picture of a black dress displaying an inviting human *décolleté* insofar as we see it accordingly, yet in actual fact that figure is also a photograph of an open book on a black background insofar as we see it accordingly. Since we can switch back and forth between the two visually relevant readings just as we do with the 'duck-rabbit'- picture, there is no reason to consider that the reading that leads to transparency (the bookwise one) provides a figurative image in a different sense than the reading that leads to transparency (the humanwise one). Let me pretend that the following figure represents the above situation.

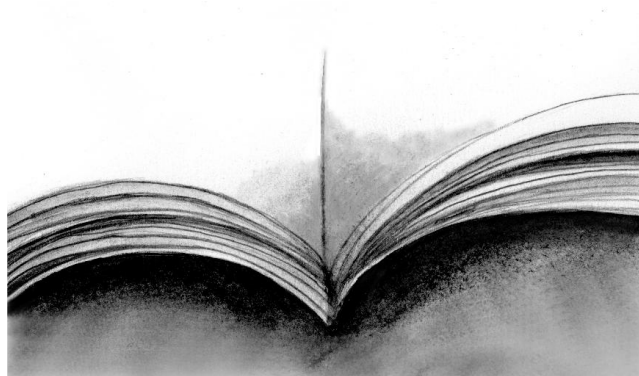


Figure 2.4 book-décolleté (by courtesy of Paola Tosti)

All in all, therefore, there is plenty of evidence showing that the distinction between transparent and opaque pictures is not a difference in kind, but simply in the species of one and the same kind: pictures.⁴² If we put things this way, the semiotician must face the problem that transparent pictures attain their intentionality causally, not conventionally. Yet the existence of transparent pictures taken as a mere species of pictures simply proves that the intentionality of a picture is not always a matter of convention, but also a matter of causation. So, provided that one simply takes transparent and opaque pictures as two species of the same representational kind, which pictorial representations as a whole instantiate, one may easily amend the semiotic paradigm with regards to this concern: the intentionality of a figurative image is established either conventionally or causally.

Considered by itself, this is only a minor amendment.⁴³ For, although a causal relation may well be taken to belong to the natural order of the world independently of human transactions, one may still say that even in such a case one cannot read off from the picture what its subject is. Suppose that all of a sudden, a mirror is transferred to Twin Earth. The mirror is now causally related to a Twin-Earth counterpart of the Earthling element that caused the original sketch to be displayed on it. Therefore, the mirror no longer depicts that element but rather its counterpart. Yet by just looking at the mirror itself one cannot grasp whether it depicts the Earthling element or its Twin-Earth counterpart; one has to know *where* the mirror is located.

All in all, therefore, *modulo* the above amendment, the Goodmanian semiotician couples pictorial and non-pictorial representations as regards their intentionality. However, by so doing the semiotician does not wish to deny that there is a difference between such kinds of representations. This difference has to be located at the level of the *figurativity* of the picture, of what makes a pictorial representation pictorial. Even at this level a theory has been traditionally put forward which sounds more or less as follows (although no-one has defended it in this naïve form): a representation is pictorial iff it resembles the subject it depicts.⁴⁴ This is the gist of the so-called *objective resemblance theory of depiction*. Yet for the semiotician not only the resemblance theory of intentionality, but also the resemblance theory of figurativity is fundamentally wrong. For, as Goodman claims,⁴⁵ not even the figurativity of a picture can be read off from the picture itself. I will deal with the criticisms against the objective resemblance theory in the next chapter, for here I wish to focus instead on the positive proposal the semiotician puts forward as to the figurativity of a picture. Hence the main second claim of a semiotic approach to depiction, which can be cashed out in two main subclaims, according to the formulation originally proposed by Goodman. First, a representation is pictorial insofar as it is considered to belong to a particular kind of symbolic system. Second, that system is a system of pictorial symbols iff such a system has a certain number of symbolic features.

The semiotic paradigm essentially revolves around this claim. As a result, in its Goodmanian form the semiotic theory goes against not only a resemblance approach to depiction, but also any approach appealing to factors that are different from a symbolic system and its features: typically, any approach that relies on perceptual factors, whether or not they are intended to grasp features of the picture's vehicle, as in the objective resemblance theories. In a nutshell, for a Goodmanian semiotician a possible world without perceivers may be a world that contains pictures, insofar as it still has a pictorial representational system with its distinctive features. In John Kulvicki's own words, representational systems that are meant, *à la* Goodman, to be pictorial are such that "some are visual, some auditory, and some are not perceptible at all" (2006:27).

Let me now explain both subclaims more in detail. To illustrate the first subclaim, we may rely on a useful example provided, once again, by Kulvicki.⁴⁶ Let us consider the following mark:

likeness

and take it as belonging to a system of verbal representations *qua* token of a verbal sign, the word “likeness”. In this case, the mark will be similar in form to the sign:

likeness

which is nothing but another token of the same word written in a different font, as well as similar in content to the sign:

similarity

since the latter tokens another word whose meaning closely resembles the meaning of “likeness” (in a Goodmanian fashion, we may say that both are signs-of-likeness). Yet we can also take our original mark as a picture of an inscription, thereby taking it as belonging to a pictorial representational system. If we were to do the same with our second and our third sign as well, we would find that our original mark would no longer be similar in form to the second sign or similar in content to the third sign. Instead, we would have three different pictures of three altogether different subjects, namely, of three different inscriptions. Our mark would instead be similar to:

likene55

understood in turn as a picture of another, though similar, inscription.⁴⁷

This example is intended to show that there is nothing in the representation itself that makes it pictorial or non-pictorial; everything depends on the representational

system it is understood to belong to. Yet this is not particularly illuminating unless one knows what makes a representational system pictorial. Hence the way in which the second subclaim is standardly used to express Goodman's position: a representational system is pictorial iff it is both a) syntactically and b) semantically dense, as well as c) relatively replete.⁴⁸ Let me spell out this definition.

To begin with, the above definition serves to tell pictorial from verbal representational systems insofar as they respectively have different structural features. A verbal system is close to a notational system, a system whose characters are indefinitely repeatable, i.e., whose symbol types are respectively instantiable by means of an infinite number of tokens. *Qua* notational system, such a system must be both syntactically and semantically *non-dense*: both syntactically and semantically, its characters are *disjoint* and *finitely differentiated*. First, the characters of a notational system are syntactically disjoint: for any sign of that system, there must be just one character to which that sign belongs. Let us consider for instance the following three signs: s, s, and j. The first two signs are signs of the letter S – two tokens of the same letter type, if you will – the third is a sign of the letter J. Yet suppose that someone has bad handwriting, making it hardly detectable whether the oblong line she has written is a sign of S or a sign of J. Well, it must be either one or the other, for syntactically S and J are utterly different.⁴⁹ Moreover, the characters of a notational system, syntactically, are finitely differentiated: it must be possible in principle to establish to which character a sign belongs, if it is a sign of that system. This feature, for instance, prevents a system of traits from being a notational system, if the length of such traits runs along a continuum such that it is impossible in principle to establish whether a sign belongs to one character or another.⁵⁰ Yet a notational system is also non-dense semantically. No two characters of such a system may share the same designation; it is always possible in principle to establish what character a designation, if any, is a designation of.⁵¹

Yet a pictorial system is both syntactically and semantically *dense*. It is syntactically dense, for given two of its characters it is always possible that a third one lies between them; thus, there is an infinite number of characters so that it must neither be the case for a sign of that system to belong to just one of those characters nor is it

principledly possible to establish to which character that sign belongs.⁵² Intuitively speaking, the idea of syntactic density is that any alteration of the (syntactically relevant) properties of a picture makes it another picture. For instance, if you just change the color of a minuscule portion of a picture, you get a new picture. Moreover, a pictorial system is semantically dense, for analogous reasons. Its characters have infinite designations, for given two characters with their respective designations there is always another one with another designation and it is not principledly possible to establish which character a designation, if any, is a designation of.⁵³ Intuitively, the idea is that any slight modification of a picture produces a new picture with a different subject. Let us suppose that the previous color alteration of a picture consists in turning a small area of Leonardo's *La Gioconda*, which is painted in pink flesh, into black. What we get is Marcel Duchamp's *L.H.O.O.Q.*, which unlike *La Gioconda* presents another subject, i.e., a moustached Mona Lisa. All in all, therefore, density allows us to differentiate a pictorial system from a verbal system.

For Goodman, syntactic and semantic density together determine the *analog* character of a representational system.⁵⁴ Alternatively put, the intuitive idea that a representational system whose signs are located along a *continuum* and whose representational power is extremely high is an analog system is, for Goodman, captured by the fact that such a system is dense, both syntactically and semantically.

Yet if density merely captures analogicity, it may hardly provide necessary conditions of figurativity. As one well knows in our computerized era, there are plenty of non-analog images, *digital* images, paradigmatically the computerized images that are made by a huge yet finite number of pixels. Insofar as they are not analog, they are not dense. For such images, it is indeed not the case that for any two characters there lies a third character inbetween. Yet they clearly are figurative images.⁵⁵

As we will see later, this problem may be accommodated by semioticians. However, the main problem with density is one Goodman himself originally noted, namely that it provides no sufficient conditions of figurativity either. For there are other representational systems that are clearly not figurative but that are both syntactically and semantically dense. Let us consider representations like diagrams and graphs, such as

for instance an analog thermometer that represents temperatures along a continuous scale. The system to which such a thermometer belongs will be both syntactically and semantically dense: given two of its characters, there will always be another character with a designation – i.e., a temperature – different from the designations – i.e., the temperatures – of the first two. Yet clearly such a thermometer does not depict temperatures.⁵⁶

To tell pictorial from diagrammatic or mere analog systems in general, Goodman puts forward an additional condition, which is normally meant to provide another necessary condition and, along with syntactic and semantic density, a sufficient condition of figurativity. This condition is *relative repleteness*: given two representational systems, one is representationally richer than the other if it mobilizes more representationally relevant properties; namely, if it mobilizes more properties to characterize what its representations characterize. For Goodman, a pictorial system is always richer than any other merely analog system. Consider e.g. a graph that represents, by means of two lines in a Cartesian system of coordinates, the trend of Italian bonds with respect to the German ones in 2014. In order for such a graph to work, the patterns of these two lines are all that count; the color of such lines, their thickness etc. are irrelevant. Let us now take any painting whatsoever and consider how many more properties of its vehicle are determinant in order for it to depict the scene it depicts: not only the lines it contains, but also the shapes they generate, as well as their colors along with their hues, saturation and shades. Thus, only the latter case belongs to a pictorial representational system.⁵⁷

Once again, we can question whether relative repleteness is a necessary condition of figurativity. Consider a graph whose colors are representationally relevant, such as for instance a graph that compares the status in 2014 of Italian bonds with respect to the German bonds by segments of different colors. Now, can we compare it with a black and white photograph, in which the different shades of black and white are all that representationally count, in order to establish which is representationally richer? Evidently, not, for they share no representationally relevant properties. Yet, unlike the graph (which is only an analog representation), the photograph is a pictorial

representation.⁵⁸ Let us now take some ink sketches. These certainly have less representationally relevant properties than a colored graph and yet again, unlike the latter, they are figurative images.⁵⁹

This problem may also be accommodated by semioticians: we will return to it soon. Once again, however, the most serious problem for Goodman's theory lies within the sufficient conditions. For there may be cases of dense as well as relatively replete representations that are not figurative images. Take a mosaic and systematically reshuffle all its tesserae so as to create an amorphous puzzle. This puzzle is surely dense (both syntactically and semantically) as well as more replete than a diagram or a graph. Yet it is hard to say that as a whole it is a figurative image; one can hardly discern a subject in it. Thus, Goodman's proposed features do not even provide jointly sufficient conditions of figurativity.⁶⁰

Before evaluating whether and how this further counterexample can be dealt with in a semiotic framework, it is time to assess why Goodman's theory leaves open the possibility of one such counterexample. The point is that, according to such a theory, what accounts for the intentionality of a pictorial representation and what accounts for its figurativity are utterly separate factors. Something that is purportedly figurative insofar as it belongs to a dense and relatively replete system may be further ascribed any meaning whatsoever. In this vein, even a non-figurative image such as a truly abstract painting (we may recall the Klee example I gave in the previous chapter) may have a figurative value in Goodman's account, in such a way that it might even turn out to be a pictorial representation.⁶¹ For, once it were ascribed a meaning – which it admittedly fails to have – it would represent that meaning in conformity with Goodman's criteria for figurativity: density and relative repleteness. Indeed, even the slightest modification of a truly abstract painting yields a different painting, insofar as it alters its syntactically relevant features.⁶² This is why the above puzzle is a counterexample for Goodman's theory. The amorphous puzzle in question is not a pictorial representation for as a whole it represents nothing. Yet it passes Goodman's criteria for figurativity, and therefore, Goodman would be forced to treat it as having a figurative value no matter what meaning were further ascribed to it.

Yet, as we have seen in the previous chapter, it is mistaken to consider what accounts for the figurativity of a picture and what accounts for its intentionality as utterly separate factors. For this consideration leads to various unwelcome consequences: to allow for pictorial representations of any kind of subject whatsoever, to disregard the difference between what one such picture depicts and what it symbolizes.⁶³ Thus, a correct theory of depiction must be such that in it, what accounts for the figurativity of a picture puts a constraint on what accounts for its intentionality.

Let me take stock. What is alive in the semiotic approach *à la* Goodman is the idea that the representational content of a picture cannot be read off from the picture itself. One has to look beyond the picture – to conventional agreements, as Goodman stressed, but also to causal relationships, as Goodman failed to take into account – in order to grasp what the subject of that picture really is. Yet what is dead in such an approach is the idea that a pictorial representation can be ascribed any subject whatsoever, entirely independently of its figurative value. The best way to take this point into account is to presume that the figurative value of a picture amounts to its having a certain figurative content, from which its pictorial content, whether specific or generic, has to be selected, either in a conventional or in a causal way. Thus, as Goodman emphasizes, a picture may well be conventionally (or causally) about something (by possibly also having a singular pictorial content, a content directly involving that very something). Yet it is not a mere proxy for that something, as Goodman theorized. For such a something is selected out of the figurative content that picture possesses.

Let us go on to see whether the amendment of Goodman's theory Kulvicki has recently proposed improves the semiotic paradigm by satisfying the above requirement.

2. *Kulvicki's Theory*

Very recently, Kulvicki has amended Goodman's theory by providing a definition of depiction that attempts to deal with the putative counterexamples discussed above.

To begin with, Kulvicki focuses his attention on the notion of *syntactically relevant properties*, i.e., properties that are syntactically relevant for the signs that belong to a certain representational system. The syntactic identity of a sign supervenes on properties of this kind, in that if one changes the syntactic identity of a sign, some of its syntactically relevant properties change as well (but the contrary does not hold true: one may change some of the syntactic properties of the sign and yet the sign remains the same). So for instance, if one changes the syntactic identity of a letter, some of its syntactic properties, notably its shape, change as well (even if not all changes in its shape also alter its syntactic identity). Analogously, as to pictures, if one changes the syntactic identity of a picture, one also changes either its shape or its colors (but not the other way around, as will prove relevant below).⁶⁴

On the basis of such a notion, Kulvicki is able to revise Goodman's conditions of figurativity. Let me begin with the revision of Goodman's conditions *qua* necessary conditions. For Kulvicki, a representational system is pictorial only if its signs are: a) relatively sensitive syntactically, b) semantically rich, c) relatively replete* (I put an asterisk on the adjective "replete" in order to stress the difference between Kulvicki's proposal and Goodman's, as we will see immediately below), plus a further condition we will see below. For the time being, let me focus on Kulvicki's a)-c), which are the counterparts of Goodman's a)-c).

Let me start with b): a representational system is *semantically rich* iff in it there are as many possible designations as syntactical types.⁶⁵ So conceived, b) does not tell a verbal from a pictorial system. In order to do this, as we do in Goodman, we have to add condition a): a representational system is *syntactically more sensitive* than another iff the modifications of the syntactically relevant properties that change the syntactic identity of a sign of the second system are included in the modifications of the syntactically relevant properties that change the syntactic identity of a sign of the first system, but not *vice versa*. According to this definition, the more syntactically sensitive a system is, the less the syntactic identity of its signs allows for modifications in their syntactically relevant properties.⁶⁶ This shows how a pictorial system differs from a verbal one. The shape modifications that are relevant to change the syntactic identity of

a verbal sign are included in the shape modifications that are relevant to change the syntactic identity of a pictorial representation, but not the other way round. If we write the mark “Alfred Hitchcock” in four different fonts, we get four tokens of the same name – those formal changes determine no change in the syntactic identity of that name. Yet if we understand those tokens as tokens of pictorial representations – typically, as pictures of inscriptions – as we already know we can (see the previous Section), then they will be tokens of four different such representations, for such formal changes determine a change in the syntactic identity of the marks taken as pictorial representations.

So meant, unlike Goodman’s corresponding conditions, Kulvicki’s conditions a) and b) allow for digital images to be included within pictorial representations. Analog images, as well as digital images, are both more syntactically sensitive than representations in other systems and semantically rich.⁶⁷

Yet like Goodman’s a)-b), Kulvicki’s a) and b) are also unable to tell a pictorial system from a diagrammatic or a graphic one. For this to occur, the further condition c) is required. A representational system is replete* with respect to another iff: i) there is an intersection between the syntactically relevant properties of the first system and the syntactically relevant properties of the second system, i.e., the set of the former properties and the set of the latter properties share at least some members; ii) the set of the syntactically relevant properties of the first system, minus that intersection, is cardinally greater than the set of the syntactically relevant properties of the second system, minus that intersection.⁶⁸

On account of c) so conceived, the counterexamples to Goodman’s analogous condition as a necessary condition disappear. One may well say that, unlike black and white photos, a colored graph is not a pictorial representation, for it belongs to a system that is less replete* than the system of b&w photos: once one disregards the syntactically relevant properties the two systems share, the first system has less such properties than the second. One gets an analogous result if one compares the first system with a system of ink sketches.

Yet even if Kulvicki's a)-c) yield necessary conditions of figurativity, they admittedly are not sufficient conditions. What served as a counterexample in this respect for Goodman remains a counterexample for Kulvicki. Let us once again consider the amorphous puzzle resulting from the recombination of a mosaic's tesserae. If you understand that puzzle as belonging to a representational system, this system will be relatively sensitive syntactically, semantically rich, and relatively replete*. Yet once again it will not be a pictorial system.⁶⁹

To deal with this counterexample, Kulvicki adds a fourth condition d) that provides both a necessary and (along with the three others) a jointly sufficient condition of figurativity: *structural transparency*. For Kulvicki, a representational system is transparent iff for any representation *R* belonging to it, any representation of *R* in the same system shares its syntactic type with *R*; put alternatively, within that system a representation and any of its metarepresentations share the syntactically relevant properties that determine their syntactic identity.⁷⁰

Now, d) certainly holds true in the case of pictorial systems. Consider a photograph and another photograph which is an exact picture of the first. These two photographs will share their colors and forms, so as to be syntactically identical.⁷¹ Yet if we take the system to which the amorphous puzzle belongs, it does not satisfy d). Take a picture, tear it into many pieces and reassemble these pieces systematically so as to produce an amorphous puzzle. Now take a new picture of this puzzle, tear it again into pieces and reassemble these pieces systematically, as well. Evidently enough, the two amorphous puzzles, the original one and the second one, do not share their syntactically relevant properties, resulting in their being syntactically different. This system is therefore not structurally transparent. Hence, it is not a pictorial system.⁷²

Is d) enough? Some people doubt it, for according to them there are counterexamples to the sufficiency of d) taken along with a)-c). First of all, if both disjunctive properties of form and disjunctive properties of color are syntactically relevant properties, the system of amorphous puzzles becomes structurally transparent as well. Moreover, consider a letter of a more articulated alphabet than the English one, such as the German alphabet, which does not belong to English, say the letter β . Such a

letter not only makes the German alphabet semantically rich, more syntactically sensitive and more relatively replete* than English, but it also makes it structurally transparent, for in mentioning itself β has the same syntactic properties as β . Obviously enough, however, an alphabetic system is not a pictorial system.⁷³

To be sure, both putative counterexamples to d) appear disputable, for different reasons (disjunctive properties are hardly legitimate properties;⁷⁴ a self-representation of a letter, as it occurs in mention, is hardly a metarepresentation of it). Yet independently of whether such counterexamples are actually acceptable, or even of whether one can find better counterexamples, once again the real problem is whether conditions a)-d) can really capture what figurativity is. A reason to be skeptical about this concern is that, as in Goodman's theory, also in Kulvicki's theory it seems that truly abstract paintings are not pictures for the mere fact that no meaning has been ascribed to them. For by themselves they meet all the new semiotic criteria of figurativity: not only a)-c), albeit revised *à la* Kulvicki, but also d). Suppose we were to reproduce (by means of a mechanical device, for instance) one of the famous Jackson Pollock's action paintings so as to create another meta- action painting that shares all its syntactically relevant properties with the first painting. So, the action painting system would not only be semantically rich, more syntactically sensitive and more relatively replete* than other systems, but also structurally transparent; in semiotic terms, the paintings belonging to such a system would therefore be figurative. They would not be pictorial representations simply because no one has hitherto used them to represent a further reality. Yet, again, this means that in a semiotic framework, the figurativity and the intentionality of a picture are utterly separate. But this remains an unwelcome result, as we have already seen.

To be sure, Kulvicki's overall account seems however to be equipped with the conceptual resources necessary to prevent this problem. To begin with, Kulvicki says that if a system is structurally transparent, then two syntactically identical representations of such a system are also such semantically. Kulvicki goes on to say that this is precisely the case with pictorial representations. If we take a photograph of a photograph, the metaphotograph that is syntactically identical with the photograph it

represents shares the same subject with that photograph.⁷⁵ Yet, Kulvicki notes, this is not the case with the system of amorphous puzzles. The second reassemblage of the first reassemblage of pieces does not share not only the syntax, but also the subject, if any, with the latter. This is really why that system is not structurally transparent.⁷⁶

But in what way are two syntactically identical representations, within a pictorial system, also identical semantically? Certainly not in relation to their aboutness. To take an extreme case, let us consider the photos of two indistinguishable twins. Definitely, their intentionality is different: the first is a photo of the first twin, the second is a photo of the second twin. Yet these photos share all their syntactically relevant properties and are, therefore, syntactically identical. Now, let us consider a photo of the first photo and a photo of the second photo. Since by structural transparency, the first metaphoto is syntactically identical to the first photo and the second metaphoto is syntactically identical to the second photo, then, insofar as the simple photos are also syntactically identical, so are their respective metaphotos. Yet the first metaphoto is of the first single photo, while the second metaphoto is of the second single photo. *Mutatis mutandis*, the same holds true in the case of pictures whose content is generic – if, for instance, we consider the case of a painting of the Earth's landscape and of an indistinguishable painting of a Twin-Earth landscape.

In order to keep the thesis that in a structurally transparent system, syntactic and semantic identity of representations must go hand in hand, Kulvicki is forced to draw a distinction between two levels of content that he borrows from Haugeland (1988): *bare bones content* and *fleshed out content*. According to Haugeland, such a distinction holds true for any kind of representational system, yet in a different way for each system individually. In the case of a pictorial representation, the fleshed out content, for Haugeland, is more or less what I have called pictorial content: it is what the representation represents to a competent spectator. The bare bones content of such a representation is instead what it directly represents, something surely more meagre than its fleshed out content.⁷⁷ Armed with this distinction in content, Kulvicki may well say that the bare bones content is the kind of content that supervenes on the syntactic identity of a pictorial representation. So, syntactically identical representations may

certainly differ in content, as in the aforementioned case of pictures of twins, or even in other cases. But the content in which they differ is their fleshed out content, while they coincide in their bare bones content.⁷⁸

If this is the case, then, indeed, the bare bones content of a pictorial representation has a constraining role with respect to its fleshed out content. In order for a representation to be pictorial, its fleshed out content must be constrained by its bare bones content: fleshed out contents are consistent with bare bones contents, as Kulvicki puts it.⁷⁹ But, then, as far as figurativity is concerned, it is not structural transparency, but rather identity in bare bones content, that wears the trousers in Kulvicki's account. What ultimately tells a pictorial system from any other representational system, so as to provide it with figurativity, can be explained by the fact that pictures have a bare bones content of a specific kind.

The fact that bare bones content is so relevant for figurativity also comes from what follows. As Kulvicki maintains, given the supervenience relation between the bare bones content and the syntactic identity of a representation, if two representations differ in such content they are not syntactically identical. Now, when this holds true of a representation and its metarepresentation, the representational system to which they belong is not structurally transparent, hence it is not pictorial. Let me expand on this.

As we have seen before, given the supervenience relation between the syntactic identity of a representation and its syntactically relevant properties, not all changes in such properties force a change in its syntactic identity. This is particularly relevant when systems involving a representation and its progressive metarepresentations (a metarepresentation of that representation, a metarepresentation of that metarepresentation, and so on) are at stake. When, in the system in question, the progressive metarepresentations are obtained by means of a certain systematic way of deforming the representation they are of (for instance, by representing the lower-order representation from a very oblique angle), the relevant representation and its metarepresentation are too different in their syntactically relevant properties, hence they are not syntactically identical, and the system is not structurally transparent. Yet when, in the system in question, the progressive metarepresentations are obtained by means of a certain

systematic way of blurring the representation they are of, the relevant representation and its metarepresentation are just slightly different in their syntactically relevant properties, and, therefore, they can still count as being syntactically identical. For the system is, essentially still structurally transparent.⁸⁰

So far, so good; by so appealing to bare bone content, Kulvicki's semiotic theory relinquishes the strict minimalism that characterizes Goodman's account and allows for the representational content of a pictorial representation to be constrained by its figurative content. Yet at this point a new question arises: where can the line be drawn between cases in which the difference in syntactically relevant properties affects the syntactic identity of a representation, hence the structural transparency of the system it belongs to, and cases in which this does not happen? For instance, if in the case of a blurry metarepresentation of a representation no alteration of the syntactic identity of the relevant representation occurs, what about a system in which impressionist paintings are represented impressionistically (is an impressionist painting of one of Claude Monet's impressionist paintings of his garden at Giverny syntactically identical to that painting)?⁸¹ The only available criterion for finding this divide in Kulvicki's theory comes from appealing to identity in bare bones content between the relevant representation and its metarepresentation. In fact, he explicitly maintains that, when such an identity obtains, the system the relevant representation and its metarepresentation belong to is structurally transparent; when it no longer obtains, the system is no longer such.⁸²

If this is the case, then in order to better understand how the bare bones content of a pictorial representation may work as the real mark of its figurativity we must look within it to see what it is really made of. In Haugeland's account, the bare bones content of a pictorial representation is nothing more than "variations of values along certain dimensions with respect to locations in other dimensions" (1998:192); for instance, the bare bones content of a photo is constituted by variations of incident light with respect to a certain direction.⁸³ Similarly, for Kulvicki, the bare bones content of a pictorial representation is very thin as well. For it must be constituted by properties that the vehicle of the pictorial representation itself possesses: the same colors and forms.⁸⁴

Since these properties are perceptually relevant, the bare bones content of pictorial representation is made of the properties that make the representation *perceivable*, as Kulvicki himself acknowledges.⁸⁵

By means of these reflections, we have arrived at a very important point. Firstly, Kulvicki agrees that it is not the case that in order for a semiotic account of figurativity to really hold true, one can account for a picture's figurativity without making reference to the perception of such a picture.⁸⁶ As we saw before, semioticians *à la* Goodman instead believe that the figurativity of a picture relies only on the symbolic features of a pictorial system, hence without appealing to features linked to the perception of a pictorial representation. Yet if figurativity is, rather, tied to the bare bones content of a pictorial representation and this content is made of perceivable properties, the above belief is incorrect. Secondly, if perceivable properties are figuratively determinant, it may well be the case that such properties are relevant for they enable a perceiver to discern not only the picture's vehicle, but also what that vehicle presents.⁸⁷

There are at least two reasons as to why this is the case. First, whenever an apparently pictorial system turns out not to be such for it is not structurally transparent, what results is that we no longer discern the subject of a certain representation in its distorted metarepresentation. If we go back to the difference between a pictorial representational system whose progressive metarepresentations share their syntactic identity with the representations they are of and another representational system whose progressive metarepresentations do not share such an identity with the representations they are of, whenever this difference obtains, then it also happens that in the former but not in the latter case one can still discern in the relevant vehicle what one can discern in the original representation. Let us, again, take a blurry photo of a blurry photo: we can discern in the former the same item we discern in the latter. On the contrary, as to the picture of a picture from a very oblique angle and the picture it is the picture of, this is not the case. Second, let us consider the difference I have previously pointed out between merely representationally ambiguous pictures, such as the 'Madonna-Evita'-picture, and perceptually ambiguous pictures, such as the 'duck-rabbit'-picture. This difference would not obtain if the content responsible for a picture's figurativity were as

meagre as defenders *à la* Kulvicki of bare bones content claim it is. As we saw earlier, the visual ambiguity of a visually ambiguous picture precedes the level of interpretation that prompts it to have different pictorial contents. Over and above the fact that the ‘duck-rabbit’- picture is both the picture *of a duck* and the picture *of a rabbit*, it is seen first in *a certain* way, then in *another*. Now, this visual ambiguity is precisely responsible for the fact that the figure has a *double* figurativity. Yet this proves that this visual ambiguity cannot be accounted for by the colors and the forms of the figure’s vehicle. For while such properties remain the same, the figure is seen first one way, then another, before being interpreted as the picture of a duck in the first case and as the picture of a rabbit in the second case. As a result, the figurative content of a picture must be constituted by something *more than* the properties of color and form that the perceiver grasps when faced with that figure’s vehicle; it must be constituted by the properties (whatever they may be; I will come back to this issue in chaps. V and VI) that in the case of a perceptually ambiguous picture allow for different things to be alternatively discerned in it.

From the syncretistic perspective I wish to defend in this book, the morale I can now draw from this survey of the semiotic approach is the following. First of all, once a semiotician recognizes that the representational content of a picture is a *pictorial* content, namely, a content that can be assessed only as a determination, whether conventional or natural, of its figurative content, this latter content has to be determined not in purely symbolic terms, but in the perceptual terms that allow a picture to make something discernible in it. In more general terms, this means that, contrary to the semiotician’s original expectations, a semiotic approach to pictorial representation may only hold true in the context of a perceptualist approach to it.⁸⁸ Moreover, once perceptualism sneaks back in to support the semiotic approach, the semioticians’ conviction that figurativity is simply a matter of the representational system in which one locates a sign is ungrounded. For it may well turn out that it is the fact that a perceiver focuses on certain properties *of the sign itself* rather than others that enables her to grasp its particular figurative content. Going back to Kulvicki’s own example, first, the fact that the sign “likeness” itself has certain properties rather than others

allows its perceiver to discern something in it that lets it function as a picture rather than as a verbal expression. Second, these properties are such that that very sign is a picture of an inscription rather than of an utterly different entity. Put alternatively, let us again consider the mark “Alfred Hitchcock”. If we wanted to take it as a picture, it could naturally be the picture of another inscription, as we said before. But it could not naturally be the picture of the famous British director. If that were the desired outcome, we would have to slightly modify the mark in such a way that we could begin to make out the director in the new arrangement. For instance, we would have to modify it like this:

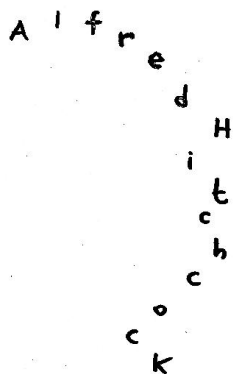


Figure 2.5 Hitchcock’s nominal silhouette

These final considerations further demonstrate that perceptualism as well as its most vituperated form, objective resemblance theories – the theories that account for depiction in terms of the picture’s vehicle and the picture’s subject sharing some of their properties – may return from the back door. For such considerations suggest that the modification a verbal sign must undergo in order to count as a pictorial representation involve properties that are roughly shared by its subject. We must, therefore, turn our attention to these theories.

Chapter III

Resemblance Theories of Depiction

1. Objective Resemblance Theories: the Simple and Fancy Versions

Objective resemblance theories of depiction revolve around the idea that figurativity consists in the fact that the picture's vehicle resembles the picture's subject. A pictorial representation is pictorial for, unlike other representations (verbal signs above all), it resembles its subject. This idea lies behind naïve evaluative judgements of pictures. The more beautiful a picture is, the more similar to its subject it is. Since the resemblance in question is typically a *perceptually relevant* resemblance – that the vehicle and the subject are alike is a perceptually graspable fact – such theories naturally belong to the perceptualist paradigm.⁸⁹

As I said in chap. I, in its naïvest form the doctrine states that something is a depiction of something else iff the former resembles the latter. Yet, as I already hinted at, it is not accidental that the theory has hardly been defended by anyone in such a form. For, as Goodman masterfully showed, the theory is clearly untenable in such a form. A relation of likeness is both reflexive and symmetric: something resembles itself and if something resembles something else, the latter resembles the former as well. Yet to depict something is neither reflexive – a pictorial representation always depicts something else – nor symmetric – if such a representation depicts something else, it is not depicted by that something. Given this conceptual situation, *being similar* to something is not a *sufficient* condition for depicting it: a twin maximally resembles its twin, yet the former does not depict the latter.⁹⁰

Yet, on behalf of an objective resemblance theorist, one may immediately reply that depictions are neither reflexive nor symmetric for they are *representations*, specifically pictorial representations. Clearly, to represent something is hardly reflexive – at least if we rule out mentioning an expression, i.e., to quote an expression in order to talk of that very expression, as a form of self-representation – and certainly non-symmetric – if something represents something else the latter does not represent the

former. Thus, a depiction inherits its being neither reflexive nor symmetric from its primarily being a representation. As a result, an objective resemblance theorist would say, at most, that resemblance is a *necessary* condition of depiction: something is a depiction of something else *only if* the former resembles the latter. For in giving such necessary conditions of depiction that theorist is interested in capturing what makes a representation pictorial, or in other words, the figurativity of a picture. Put alternatively, in giving necessary conditions of depiction in terms of resemblance, such a theorist is interested in yielding in the same terms the necessary and sufficient conditions for the figurativity of a picture: a picture is a figurative image of something iff it resembles that very something.⁹¹

Yet Goodman well foresaw his opponent's move⁹² and found that it did not work. For, he noted, there are many pictures that do not resemble their subject, for the simple reason that they are not about anything and, hence, they cannot resemble anything.⁹³ These are the pictures of non-existent things, such as a painting of Sherlock Holmes, the famous fictional London-based detective.

As I already hinted at in the previous chapter, however, it is quite disputable that pictures of non-existents are about nothing. Unlike Goodman, one may well say that there are things that do not exist. For instance, following the insight Alexius Meinong famously entertained, many people have argued that there are fictional entities, even though they do not exist in our spacetime; Holmes is precisely an entity of this kind.⁹⁴ Now, once we accept a non-existent entity in the overall domain of what there is, nothing in principle prevents a picture not only from being about it even if it does not exist, as some have claimed,⁹⁵ but also from resembling it even if it does not exist. As we have seen before, resemblance is a relation. First of all, metaphysically speaking, in order for something to be a relation, there must obviously be *relata* for it: a relation without *relata* is a contradiction in terms. Yet nothing but a theoretical prejudice requires such *relata* to exist. For there are relations of which at least one *relatum* does not exist.⁹⁶ For instance, stars that no longer exist presently affect our senses; some items that do not exist and will never exist, such as the fountain of youth or the philosopher's stone, are more famous than items that do exist. Moreover, resemblance

seems to be precisely one of these relations. Last night I have dreamt of a very intriguing woman who resembled Penelope Cruz; unfortunately, the target of my dream does not exist. All in all, therefore, pictures of non-existent items are not counterexamples *per se* to the claim that something depicts something else only if the former resembles the latter. For, if what I have just said is correct, then nothing in principle prevents a picture from depicting a non-existent item as long as it resembles such a thing.⁹⁷

Of course, these considerations do not mean that the objective resemblance theory is correct. For it may be hard to spell out how a picture resembles the non-existent item it allegedly depicts. To revisit an example I offered in chap. I, even if from the ontological point of view we were to accept *impossibilia*, i.e., entities that not only do not exist but also could not exist,⁹⁸ would it be possible to draw a picture of, say, Twardy, the impossible wooden cannon made of steel, by making that picture somehow similar to such an entity? Nevertheless, what such considerations indicate is that one cannot rule out the objective resemblance theory of depiction by merely appealing to the fact that there are pictures of non-existents, as Goodman does.

Yet there is a better way to interpret Goodman's criticism. Let us again consider generic pictures, pictures whose subject is generic so that they are about nothing in particular, such as Turner's aforementioned *Whalers*. As I hinted at in the previous chapter, these pictures are undoubtedly non-relational pictures.⁹⁹ For, unlike pictures of non-existents, the fact that they are non-relational does not depend on one's ontological taste, but on the fact that their subject is precisely generic and not particular. So, in such cases there really is nothing, existent or not, the picture is about, hence, a fortiori, nothing the picture can resemble to.

Yet, here too, the objective resemblance theorist has several opportunities to respond to his opponent over and above relational pictures. First of all, she may say that, just as there are non-relational pictures, i.e., generic pictures, there is both a relational and a non-relational notion of similarity. The latter notion is mobilized when we say, for instance, that a woman resembles a mermaid. For in such a case we do not wish to say that there is someone – namely, a mermaid – that woman resembles to, but

rather that the woman is mermaid-like, that is, has mermaid-wise features.¹⁰⁰ Now, a generic picture may resemble something in the same non-relational sense; Turner's aforementioned painting resembles a vessel insofar as it is vessel-like, that is, has vessel-wise features. Moreover, the theorist may go on to say that the figurativity of a generic picture consists precisely in one such monadic feature of similarity.¹⁰¹

This response multiplies the amount of similarities: a monadic notion of similarity flanks the traditional, relational one. This may not be a drawback in itself, but it would certainly be better to work with just one notion of similarity, not only for reasons of conceptual parsimony but also because of the intuitive idea that if a picture is similar to an object *O*, while another picture is similar to some *F* or other, there is something the two pictures share, namely their being similar to something. Moreover, and perhaps more problematically, for the present purposes, if similarity is manifold and it constitutes figurativity, then the latter should be multiplied, as well. Insofar as it non-relationally resembles something, a generic picture must indeed be figurative in a different sense than a picture that is really about something. Yet this is hardly the case: intuitively speaking, we wish both of them to be *pictures*, i.e., *pictorial* representations.¹⁰²

However, the objective resemblance theorist is not committed to such a response. For she may also deal relationally with the similarity affecting generic pictures. Indeed, she may say that the figurativity of a generic picture is captured by its *relational* similarity, as well. For, although it is not similar to a particular individual, it is similar to all the instances of a certain *kind* – to all vessels, in the Turner example.¹⁰³

Yet there is an additional way for Goodman to pursue his critique. Even if it turned out that resemblance is necessary for depiction, it would be of no use in order to explain it for it does not capture what figurativity really is. For, in any case, it does not provide sufficient conditions of figurativity. Hence, representing something and resembling that something provide no jointly sufficient conditions of depiction. Suppose that a written page contains the expression “the last description of this page” twice: at the beginning and at the end of that page. The first token of that expression surely refers

to the second token and also resembles it. Yet clearly, the first token is not a depiction of the second.¹⁰⁴

This critique can be seen as part of a more general critique about this concern by Goodman. To begin with, as it is plain to see, resemblance is not a dyadic relation between two items, a ressembler and a resemblee, but rather a *triadic* relation between a ressembler, a resemblee and a third item, a parameter of a similarity; in a nutshell, resemblance is always resemblance *under a certain respect*. Yet moreover if this is the case, resemblance is of no use in accounting for depiction. For, Goodman remarks, resemblance so conceived is *ubiquitous*: everything is similar to something else under some respect or other. In order to see this unserviceability of resemblance for depiction, it is enough to realize that a painting is not only similar to what it depicts under certain parameters, but it is also similar, perhaps even more, to another painting under the “pictorial representation”- parameter: over and above having their respective subjects, both paintings are indeed pictorial representations.¹⁰⁵ The ‘tokens’- case recalled before is just another example of this predicament. The first token of “the last description of this page” resembles the second token of such an expression in its morpho-syntactic features, yet although it also represents such a token, the first token does not depict the second one.

2. *Objective Resemblance Theories: the Sophisticated and Real Versions*

Though powerful, it is unclear to whom Goodman addresses his last critique. In point of fact, no real objective resemblance theorist has ever maintained that something depicts a subject only if the former resembles the latter, period. From Plato onwards, every real objective resemblance theorist has maintained that something depicts a subject only if it resembles the latter under some respect.¹⁰⁶ Yet if this is the case, then Goodman’s above critique is inefficacious. For an objective resemblance theorist may still reply that Goodman has simply failed to capture the *right* respect of resemblance that provides not only a necessary condition of depiction, but also the necessary and sufficient condition of a picture’s figurativity, hence, along with what satisfies the intentionality condition,

jointly sufficient conditions of depiction. Therefore, tokens representing and resembling other tokens of the same expression do not depict them for the former do not resemble the latter under the right respect.

As a result, the crucial critique that Goodman should address to his opponent is not any *specific* critique that resemblance under *this* or *that* respect does not provide both necessary and sufficient conditions of figurativity, but rather a *general* critique to the effect that *no* such proposal may in principle work. Yet as far as I know, Goodman has never provided such a general critique. In point of fact, Dominic Lopes has provided a general critique that, however, is solely addressed to the objective resemblance theorist who were to maintain that the necessary condition of depiction in resemblance terms is given in terms of a *disjunction* of respects. As a result, even if such a critique holds true, it leaves unscathed an objective resemblance theorist who maintained that such a condition can be provided in terms of an *additional* single respect that has been left untouched by Goodman's specific critiques. So, unless a further general critique on *this* point arises, there is still room for one such theorist to operate. Let us examine matters in detail.

A traditional objective resemblance theory of depiction, such as the one typically ascribed to Plato in the *Cratylus*, maintains that something depicts its subject only if the former resembles the latter in form *and* in color.¹⁰⁷ As I noted above, this theoretical choice shows that, in point of fact, objective resemblance theories belong to the perceptualist paradigm. For, although form and colors are treated here as completely objective properties – properties that are instantiated by things in the world – they are perceivable properties – properties a perceiver is sensible to in her perceptual apprehension of the world. As we will see below, this theoretical choice was later confirmed in the 'objective resemblance'- approach. For although subsequent theorists have appealed to respects that differ from the ones proposed by Plato, such respects still mobilize perceivable properties.

It is clear that this a traditional theory does not work. Pictures that distort their subjects, as in oblong mirrors, do not resemble such subjects in form, while black and white pictures of their colored subjects do not resemble them in color. Moreover, as

Descartes originally envisioned,¹⁰⁸ a weakened version of this theory, stating that vehicle-subject resemblance must occur *either* in form *or* in color does not work either. For we may have a distorted black and white picture of its subject.

Obviously enough, these specific critiques merely prompt an objective resemblance theorist to find other, more sophisticated, candidates to play the role of the relevant respects of similarity. An interesting and natural strategy such a theorist may perform is to look for candidates that still match the perceptualist paradigm and yet mobilize the role of the perceiver in a more substantial form than traditional objective resemblance theories do. For on the one hand, such candidates are still objective features that the picture's vehicle and the picture's subject may share and yet, on the other hand, they are also mind-dependent features. For, as the theorist may affirm, what the above counterexamples show is that the relevant features must be features that are 'out there' and yet that would not exist if there were no one able to grasp them.

In itself, it is not contradictory that a feature is both objective and mind-dependent. For, as Michael Newall has rightly noticed, not all mind-dependent features are intrinsically subjective. One property may be taken to be mind-dependent insofar as it depends on a perspective or a way of perceiving: it changes whenever such a perspective or way changes. Yet insofar as that perspective or way has a geometrical or optical character, that property is no less objective than non-perspectival properties of objects. One such property is still a property of the object that is grasped under such an orientation or perception and not a property of the subject that grasps such an object.¹⁰⁹ I will, therefore, call properties of this kind *weakly mind-dependent* properties. In the same vein, an obvious suggestion consists in mobilizing the weakly mind-dependent counterparts of the features the traditional objective resemblance theorist works with.¹¹⁰

An intuitive idea that comes from Renaissance studies on perspective is that, although a picture's vehicle and a picture's subject do not share their shape – and they are unable to do so, since the latter is three-dimensional while the former is typically not (putting sculptures aside, for the time being) – they still share the “visual pyramid”, or better yet the solid angle, circumscribed by the straight lines one can trace from the perceiver's ideal eye to an object's contours.¹¹¹ Independently of whether this object is

the picture's vehicle or the picture's subject, that pyramid or angle remains the same in both cases. On the basis of this idea, a defender of an objective resemblance theory of depiction may preliminarily say that a picture depicts its subject only if its vehicle resembles the subject in such a pyramid or angle that we may take as their shared *occlusion shape* – called as such because it is the shape that, once it is projected on a plane that lies between the perceiver and the picture's subject, prevents that perceiver from seeing that subject by utterly occluding it – or keep as their shared *outline shape* – if we wish to stress the shape the solid angle ends up as having.¹¹² Whichever way we look at it, this property is surely mind-dependent: if the observer's point of view changes, the relevant occlusion or outline shape changes as well. Yet it is a property of objects, not of perceivers, for it is one of the objects' geometrical properties.¹¹³ Therefore, it is a weakly mind-dependent property.

Just as there is a weakly mind-dependent counterpart of form that an objective resemblance theorist may exploit for the purpose of explaining depiction, there is also a weakly mind-dependent counterpart of color that such a theorist may mobilize for the same purpose. This property is *aperture color*. While surface color is the pigment a surface effectively has, aperture color is its mind-dependent and yet objective counterpart. For it is the color that is ascribed to a surface insofar as it is seen through a small aperture, such as a peephole. Now, unlike surface color, an aperture color is sensitive to shadowing. While a surface color remains the same independently of whether shadows are cast on it (a wall is overall white independently of whether shadows are cast on certain parts of it), an aperture color is sensitive to changes in the luminosity variations that are induced by such shadows (if a perceiver looks through a peephole at a uniformly colored wall where shadows are cast, she will perceive different aperture colors). So, even if a picture's vehicle and a picture's subject can differ in their surface colors precisely because of shadowing – a different pigment will be painted on the vehicle in order to render a certain surface color of a subject where shadows are cast – their aperture colors will coincide – by looking through a peephole both at that vehicle and at that subject, we perceive no difference. So, the relevant defender of objective resemblance theories of depiction may modify her previous claim and say that a picture

depicts its subject only if its vehicle resembles such a subject *not only* in occlusion or outline shape, *but also* in aperture color.¹¹⁴

Clearly, however, resemblance in both of these properties between the picture's vehicle and the picture's subject is not a necessary condition of depiction. For there are cases in which the vehicle and the subject do not share their occlusion or outline shape, as well as cases in which the vehicle and the subject do not share their aperture color. As to occlusion or outline shape, any caricature is such that its vehicle does not share its occlusion or outline shape with its subject. The same holds true of any picture which is painted in a perspective system that is non-linear.¹¹⁵ As to aperture color, we may consider for example a painting of an apple that is completely red, including its aperture color, even if the apple that painting depicts has different aperture colors of red, for different shadows are cast on it.¹¹⁶

Once we have such counterexamples, it is easy to come up with a further counterexample to the obvious weakening of this version of the objective resemblance theories of depiction, i.e., a weakening that maps the corresponding weakening of Plato's doctrine on depiction. According to this new weakening, a picture depicts its subject only if its vehicle resembles such a subject *either* in occlusion viz. outline *shape* or in aperture color.¹¹⁷ Quite simply, we may consider again a caricature, hence a picture that does not share its occlusion or outline shape with its subject, whose aperture color is not the same as the aperture color of such a subject.

In point of fact, however, the defender of this variant of the objective resemblance theory does not need to recur to such a weakening, for she sets up an utterly different line of defense. I will consider this line in the next Section, for it leads such a theorist out of the range of objective resemblance theories. For the time being, let me simply assess another line of defense an objective resemblance theorist may endorse. Such a line consists in further weakening the previous weakening by first mobilizing *further* respects of resemblance that a picture's vehicle and a picture's subject may share and then claiming that a picture depicts its subject only if its vehicle resembles such a subject under a *disjunction* of such respects. The idea is therefore that

there is at least one such respect that such a vehicle and such a subject share, so that a picture's figurativity consists in this sharing.¹¹⁸

It is against such a move that Lopes focuses his general critique of objective resemblance theories of depiction. According to his own lights, this is the decisive critique for it is supposed to hold in principle. Such a critique may indeed explain why, for him, objective resemblance theories have become mere "historical curiosities" (2005:26). The critique goes as follows. Any objective resemblance theory, he says, must satisfy two constraints. The first is the so-called *diversity constraint*: given the variety of pictures, namely the fact that pictures come in altogether different styles (those following a linear perspective, those following other forms of perspective, those following no perspective at all ...), there is no chance for the theory to hold that there is *just one* respect under which all pictures resemble their subjects; only a disjunction of such respects may work.¹¹⁹ As we have just seen, by appealing to the above theoretical weakening, the objective resemblance theorist may go precisely in this direction. She will therefore satisfy this constraint, which, at least *prima facie*, seems quite reasonable. Yet, for Lopes, there is another constraint one such theory must satisfy, namely the *independence constraint*: one does not have to establish what a picture represents in order to establish what that picture is like.¹²⁰ This second constraint is also utterly reasonable: even if the figurativity of a picture is accounted for in terms of resemblance, resemblance does not account for the intentionality of a picture. For one does not read off what the subject of a picture is from what a picture's vehicle resembles. Yet, Lopes proceeds to note, the two constraints cannot be satisfied at one and the same time. For if the first constraint is satisfied, the second constraint cannot be satisfied as well: we must know what the subject of a picture is in order to know under what respect that picture's vehicle resembles that subject.¹²¹

Some contemporary objective resemblance theorists have tried to show that, *pace* Lopes, both constraints can be simultaneously satisfied.¹²² To begin with, however, I am not sure whether their approach gives a convincing account. According to such an approach, depiction is determined by a successful communicative overt intention of resemblance. Simplifying matters a bit, something depicts something else

iff the former is successfully intended by someone to be similar to the latter (under some respect or other) in such a way that this intention is the communicative intention to generate the belief in an appropriate audience that the latter has a certain content by means of the fact that this intention is recognized by that audience (either via conventional means or not). Yet I question whether this definition provides a necessary condition of depiction. Explicit fakes which are successfully and intentionally produced to resemble originals in order for an audience to recognize that they were so intentionally produced, such as fake Dolce & Gabbana underwear, for example, appear as counterexamples to such a strategy, for they are not pictures of the originals. Moreover, independently of whether there really are counterexamples to the above definition, in order for the above strategy to work against Lopes it must endorse a maximalist approach to depiction, according to which accounting for what makes something depict something else also accounts for the sense in which the former is a representation of the latter.¹²³ For this is the only way to stick to the diversity constraint and to the independence constraint at one and the same time. One cannot read off what a picture represents from its figurativity in this approach, either. Yet, insofar as that picture is a depiction resembling its subject under some respect or other, it represents its content in a different sense from a non-pictorial representation. Yet as I said in chap. I, I do not regard this as being the right approach to depiction: a depiction is a representation over and above its being pictorial.¹²⁴ Finally, and perhaps crucially, even if for argument's sake one swallowed maximalism on depiction, it remains that, in accepting Lopes' diversity constraint, that approach shares with Lopes an assumption concerning such a constraint that I take to be questionable. Rejecting this constraint, however, amounts precisely to reinitiating the quest for a *single* respect of resemblance. In order to illustrate this final point, let me return to an assessment of Lopes' constraints.

To be sure, Lopes' independence constraint is unavoidable, especially if an objective resemblance theorist wishes to reject strict minimalism. Even though the figurative content of a picture has to do with the fact that the picture's vehicle resembles the picture's subject, as I have stated repeatedly that content does not determine its

pictorial content; simply put, the former constrains the latter. Yet if the independence constraint were not satisfied, the figurative content of a picture would determine its pictorial content. For an objective resemblance theory of depiction, this would amount to an utterly unwelcome result. As I have just said, we do not want for the intentionality of a picture to be accounted for in terms of its resemblance with its subject.

Yet, *pace* Lopes, the diversity constraint can be avoided by an objective resemblance theorist. For, as we have just seen, its adoption is grounded in the conviction that, given the huge variety of pictures, there can be no single respect under which a picture resembles its subject. Though reasonable, this conviction depends on the further assumption I alluded to in the penultimate paragraph. According to such an assumption, the single objective respect that a picture and a subject would have to share would have to be a *tight* one, i.e., one which is possessed by a restricted number of entities; as specific forms and colors, whether weakly mind-dependent or not, surely are. Now it is clear that there cannot be such a respect, precisely because of the huge variety of pictures that exist. Yet if it turned out that such a respect were so *loose* as to allow for altogether different pictorial items such as *La Gioconda*, on the one hand, and a stick figure of a woman, on the other, to be similar to their respective subjects under that very respect, there would still be room for a theorist to spell out the necessary condition of depiction that allegedly accounts for the figurativity of a picture in terms of vehicle – subject resemblance under such a respect. To my mind, the respect has to be this loose. For the mark of figurativity must already be present precisely in minimal pictures that are nowhere near the great paintings that have characterized the history of art; just as stick figures, as well as pattern poems, or even names opportunely reshaped as the “Hitchcock” nominal silhouette I presented at the end of the previous chapter, indeed are.¹²⁵ See Lewis Carroll’s famous pictorial pun:

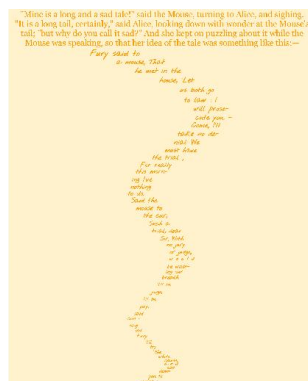


Figure 3.1 Lewis Carroll, *The Mouse Tale* (from *Alice in Wonderland*), <https://docs.google.com/a/unito.it/drawings/d/1F9NT3xhDYUIPZmgFHmCGceeZYiei50aRMyoDg8w8d6I/edit?hl=en>

To be sure, one may counterargue that even looseness of the respect is of no use for depiction, provided that one manages to put forward the general critique against single respects of resemblance that was missing in Goodman. We may find this general critique in an argument by Ben Blumson, which states that an exact representational copy of its meaning – as some onomatopoeic words, or, as I would add (just to take auditory examples out of focus for the time being), a flash of light used to mean a similarly flashing event, indeed are – is a representation of such a meaning that does not depict it. Since exact copies of something are similar, *ex hypothesi*, under *any* respect to that something, then, a fortiori there cannot be any single respect of resemblance, not even a loose one, that makes a representation a depiction of its subject.¹²⁶

This counterexample is disputable. First of all, are meanings entities that can be *resembled*? Moreover, even if meanings can be resembled over and above their being represented, are not their representations pictures,¹²⁷ for they simply are cases in which their figurative and their pictorial content collapse? To opportunely modify an example provided by Kulvicki that I discussed in the previous chapter, if one takes the expression “inscription”, can it not at the same time represent and depict another inscription shaped more or less the same way?

Yet, even if the counterexample works, it does not affect the objective resemblance theorist’s conviction that a resemblance under a certain respect is a

necessary condition of depiction. Rather, it only affects the objective resemblance theorist's further conviction that what provides a necessary condition of depiction in resemblance terms is *eo ipso* not only a necessary, but also and primarily a sufficient condition of figurativity; hence, along with what satisfies the intentionality condition, it provides jointly sufficient conditions of depiction. For what it really shows is that the respect according to which the picture's vehicle and the picture's subject are alike must somehow be *selected* in order for the former to be a pictorial representation of the latter. Thus, a flash of light that is used to mean a very similar flash still does not depict it. For that other *selection* factor, over and above resemblance under a certain respect, must be mobilized as a further necessary condition of depiction, hence as a (necessary and) *jointly* sufficient condition of figurativity, to be, along with what satisfies the intentionality condition, a jointly sufficient condition of depiction.¹²⁸ Moreover, this respect must again be a loose one. For, as Blumson himself acknowledges,¹²⁹ pattern poems are pictures. Yet as we have just seen, pattern poems are nothing but other cases of nominal silhouettes like the "Hitchcock" I previously appealed to. Thus, the relevant respect of resemblance between a picture's vehicle and a picture's subject must be such that it can be found both in the great paintings of our artistic tradition and in humble pictures like pattern poems or nominal silhouettes in general.

Let me take stock. I hope to have shown, up until this point, that Goodman does not provide a knockdown argument against the objective resemblance theorist's claim that a picture depicts its subject only if its vehicle resembles such a subject under a *certain* respect. To my mind, Lopes provides one such argument. Yet Lopes' argument is addressed only against the different claim one such theorist may hold that a picture depicts its subject only if its vehicle resembles such a subject under a *disjunction* of respects. Hence, there is still a path – admittedly, a narrow one – that is open for the objective resemblance theorist to provide in resemblance terms a necessary condition of depiction that avoids Lopes' critique, provided that such a theorist is able to find the right *single* respect of resemblance. It is likely, however, that such a way would not yet provide sufficient conditions of figurativity, and, hence, it would also fail to provide, along with what satisfies the intentionality condition, jointly sufficient conditions of

depiction. Thus, it must be fruitfully incorporated, along with other factors, in a syncretist approach to depiction that provides the, hopefully, right account of a picture's figurativity, hence of its pictorial character.

3. *Subjective Resemblance Theories: the 'Double Experience' - Versions*

As I said above, the objective resemblance theorist who appeals to occlusion or outline shape and aperture color as the right respects of resemblance between a picture's vehicle and a picture's subject does not choose to weaken such an appeal by disjunctively considering such respects or even further respects. Rather, she appeals to *representation*. Admittedly, the relevant resemblance under a certain respect does not obtain between the picture's vehicle and the picture's subject *per se*. Rather, it obtains between that vehicle and that subject *qua represented as having such a respect* (i.e., *qua represented as having both the occlusion or outline shape and the aperture color the vehicle approximately has*).¹³⁰

Yet the problem with such an account is how a resemblance so conceived can still be an *objective* resemblance. A relation of resemblance between two items under a certain respect is given in terms of their *actual* approximate sharing certain properties; for instance, if a person resembles another person in terms of youth, in actual fact they approximately share their age. Yet *ex hypothesi* the *relata* the alleged resemblance relation mobilizes in such an account may not actually share the relevant properties: in the case of a caricature, for example, the picture's vehicle actually has a certain occlusion or outline shape that the picture's subject does not actually possess.

On behalf of the objective resemblance theorist, we may reply that to say that a subject is represented as having the relevant properties means that such a subject *possibly* possesses those properties. So, the vehicle and the subject may still resemble one another *counterfactually*: if this and that were the case, the subject would also have those properties, hence it would resemble the vehicle under the relevant respect. Let us consider, for example, a caricature of Berlusconi that shows him as being shorter than

he actually is. If Berlusconi had been that much shorter, he would have had an occlusion or outline shape resembling the one the caricature possesses.

Such a move has an independent advantage. For it may account for pictures of *merely possible* entities, i.e., entities that do not exist although they might have existed, in terms of objective resemblance that however obtain counterfactually.¹³¹ Let us consider for example Elip, the merely possible son Elizabeth I of England and Philip II of Spain might have had (as we well know, the two monarchs actually never shared a son at all). Can there be a portrait of Elip whose figurativity is accounted for in objective resemblance terms? The present theorist would respond affirmatively. For if Elizabeth and Philip had had such a son and this individual had had a certain physical constitution, he would have approximately had the same occlusion or outline shape that portrait possesses.

This is a very interesting move that I think is on the right track. Yet it is not clear whether one can always capture represented resemblance in terms of possible resemblance. For represented resemblance might even be *impossible* resemblance. In this respect, one might assume that there are pictures not only of mere *possibilia*, but also of *impossibilia*. For the antecedent of the relevant counterfactual – if a certain individual had existed so as to have been an individual of a given type, she would have shared certain properties with the picture's vehicle – may even hold *impossibly*. Let us again consider the Penrose triangle, a figure in which apparently one discerns a branch that is both in front of and receding from another such branch. What must be the case in order for such an item to have an occlusion or outline shape that resembles the one the painting possesses? Perhaps, the state of affairs that makes the antecedent of the relevant counterfactual true is an *impossible* one, so that the resemblance that conditional's consequent is about holds *impossibly* as well. Supporters of impossibilities would be happy with such a predicament: the relevant resemblance occurs in impossible worlds, they would say. Yet to appeal to *impossibilia* in order to preserve objective resemblance between a picture and its subject is perhaps too high of an ontological price to pay.¹³²

The obvious alternative interpretation is to provide a non-objectivist account of the idea that the relevant respect of resemblance is established by the fact that a certain picture's subject is represented as having certain properties, the properties the picture's vehicle possesses. *From the perspective* of a perceiver, the subject is merely *taken* to have such properties even though it does not possess them (actually, and perhaps also possibly). But this amounts to saying that an objective resemblance theory of depiction leads to a *subjective* resemblance theory. What counts is not that the picture's vehicle and the picture's subject effectively resemble each other (under a certain respect), but that the picture's subject is *thought* to be similar (under that respect) to such a vehicle. Since subjective resemblance theories also belong to the perceptualist paradigm, such an idea is given an experiential twist. Indeed, it is ultimately developed in two ways: a) a picture depicts its subject only if the experience of that picture's vehicle resembles (under a certain respect) the experience a suitable perceiver may have of that picture's subject; b) a picture depicts its subject only if its suitable perceiver entertains a proper experience of similarity, i.e., an experience of that picture's vehicle as similar (under a certain respect) to that picture's subject. Let me spell out these two ways in detail, starting from the first.

According to a), the relevant necessary condition of depiction consists in the fact that looking at a picture's vehicle is close enough (under a certain respect) to looking at that picture's subject. This claim, which historically traces back to Descartes,¹³³ has been mainly developed by Budd (2004) and Peacocke (1987) respectively. The two authors basically differ in the respect of resemblance between the relevant experiences they appeal to. According to Budd, a picture depicts its subject only if the visual field it prompts in a suitable perceiver is *structurally isomorphic* to the field that its subject, when seen from a certain perspective, would prompt – the elements of the first visual field are among each other in more or less the same relations in which the elements of the second field would be.¹³⁴ According to Peacocke, the relevant necessary condition of depiction lies in a similarity of *form* between the visual field the picture's vehicle prompts and the visual field the picture's subject (which is an entity that falls under a certain concept and is seen under a certain perspective) would prompt.¹³⁵

In this variant, the subjective resemblance theory is a disguised objective resemblance theory. For, although it focuses on similarities between the *experiences* of the picture's vehicle and the picture's subject rather than between such a vehicle and such a subject, it appeals to *objective* similarities between such experiences. In point of fact, it is quite natural to shift from an objective resemblance to a subjective resemblance theory of depiction insofar as one appeals to similarities between pictures and their subjects in the way they *look*.¹³⁶ For, unless one reconceives such similarities in the way they look as similarities in objective though mind-dependent (actually, perception-dependent) properties, as e.g. occlusion or outline shape are, it is quite natural to think of these similarities as similarities between the *experiences* one has in facing a picture and its subject respectively.

Yet, then, several problems we have already seen with respect to objective resemblance theories return from the back door. Let us again consider caricatures (or non-linearly perspectival pictures for that matter). Clearly, in such cases not only does the picture's vehicle not resemble the picture's subject (in the relevant respect), but the experience of such a vehicle does not resemble (in the relevant respect) the experience of the picture's subject either.¹³⁷

Peacocke's reply consists in stating that in such cases the relevant similarity holds between the experience of the picture's vehicle and the experience not of the picture's intuitive subject, but of an adequate distortion of such a subject.¹³⁸ Returning to the example of Berlusconi's caricature, the relevant similarity obtains between the experience of that caricature and the experience of a distorted Berlusconi who is shorter than Berlusconi himself.

Yet such a reply does not work. Like any perceptualist, Peacocke rejects strict minimalism: for him as well, what accounts for the figurativity of a picture constrains what accounts for the intentionality of a picture. In his account, the intentionality of a picture is established by the fact that one successfully intends that the visual field prompted by the picture's vehicle and the visual field prompted by the picture's subject are relevantly similar (i.e., in form).¹³⁹ This thesis indeed amounts to at least conforming to a loosely minimalist account. For it prompts Peacocke to claim that, of

all the possible candidates for the subject of a picture, i.e., all the candidates whose experience is similar in form to the experience of the relevant picture, the subject of that picture is that item whose experience is successfully intended by someone to be similar in form to the experience of that picture. Yet, if this is the case, then in the problematic cases Peacocke is forced to choose one of the following alternatives. Either the picture fails to have the subject one intuitively ascribes to it – one can only *successfully* intend that the visual field prompted by the picture's vehicle and the visual field prompted by the *subject's distortion* are relevantly similar, yet the subject's distortion is not the picture's intuitive subject (in the caricature's case, the distorted Berlusconi is not Berlusconi). Or, since there is no *successful* intention to the effect that the visual field prompted by the picture's vehicle and the visual field prompted by the picture's subject – i.e., the picture's intended subject – are similar in form, the image in question is no picture at all. For although it has a certain figurative value, since that figurative value prevents it from being a picture of its subject, it is only a mere representation of such a subject.¹⁴⁰ Yet neither alternative is appealing. We wish for the picture in question to be both a *picture* and a picture of its intuitive subject. Of course, Peacocke might even reject loose minimalism and stick to strict minimalism, like the semiotic account *à la* Goodman. Yet, even independently of the fact that it is difficult to be a strict minimalist and a perceptualist at the same time, strict minimalism is hardly satisfying, as we have seen.

In order to deal with this very problem, Budd proposes that, in the problematic cases, the relevant picture is not the picture of a distorted subject, but rather a distorted picture of its intuitive subject.¹⁴¹ Yet this proposal fares no better. For it brings us directly back to the original problem: if a relevant picture is a distorted picture of its subject, how can its experience be relevantly similar to the experience of such a subject?

All in all, the problem in question seem to turn the 'double experience' - version of the subjective resemblance theories into a trilemma: it can either say that the problematic picture is a picture not of its intuitive subject, but of another subject, or that it is not a *picture*, but a mere representation, of that subject, or stick to strict minimalism

– a picture’s figurative value puts no constraint on its intentionality. Yet, to stress the point again, for different reasons, neither of these three alternatives is appealing.

If we look at the matter carefully, however, we may easily see that this problem arises when, in this version of the resemblance theory, only the *qualitative* properties of a pictorial experience are taken into consideration, i.e., the properties that contribute to give that experience its specific phenomenal character, the experience’s ‘what is like’; as Peacocke explicitly maintains.¹⁴² For in the problematic cases the comparison between *these* properties and the corresponding qualitative properties of the corresponding experience of the picture’s subject does not reveal the expected similarity (in the relevant respect).

Yet let us suppose that, instead, the subjective resemblance theorist mobilizes the genuinely *representational* properties of a pictorial experience, i.e., the properties that contribute to give that experience a certain representational content, or, in other words, that let that experience be the experience *of* that picture *as* having certain features. If such properties are mobilized, then there is a chance that the above problem will not arise.

There is an independent justification for such a move. The aforementioned properties of such an experience must be mobilized in a subjective resemblance theory if that theory intends to account for the picture’s figurativity in terms of the picture’s having a certain figurative content. For the figurative content of a picture will indeed strictly correspond to the representational content of the experience of such a picture. The figurative content of a picture is indeed what one can *discern* – by means of the appropriate experience – in it (I will come back on this point in chaps. V and VI).

Now, among these representational properties, there is the property that makes such an experience an experience of *similarity*, i.e., an experience such that its representational content has among its constituents a property of similarity (under a certain respect) affecting the picture’s vehicle and the picture’s subject. By having such a content, the pictorial experience is the experience of seeing the picture’s vehicle *as similar* to the picture’s subject (under the relevant respect). As Hyman maintains, by appealing to such a property, instead of saying that a picture depicts its subject only if

the experience of that picture resembles the experience of that subject (in the relevant respect), the subjective resemblance theorist may proceed to say that a picture depicts its subject only if that picture is experienced as resembling that subject (in that respect),¹⁴³ or in other words, she may shift from the a)-versions to the b)-versions of the subjective resemblance theories. Moreover, as I hinted at before, once the pictorial experience is so conceived, the subjective resemblance theorist may well avoid the aforementioned problem concerning caricatures and non-linearly perspectival paintings, as we will see in the next Section.

4. *Subjective Resemblance Theories: the 'Experience of Similarity' - Versions*

In his (1998) and in related papers, Robert Hopkins precisely defends the most articulated version of the subjective resemblance theory based on the idea that the figurativity of a picture is captured by an experience of similarity. According to Hopkins, a picture depicts its subject only if the picture is experienced as resembling the subject in outline shape. We already know what outline shape is: it is the weakly mind-dependent property an item has that results from subtending a certain solid angle formed by leading straight lines from a certain perspective point (the observer's ideal eye) to the item's contours. Yet outline shape is no longer exploited to stress a similarity between the picture's vehicle and the picture's subject, as in a previously seen version of the objective resemblance theory. Rather, outline shape counts as the relevant respect in an experience of similarity that affects the picture. As I just said, the picture is *experienced* as resembling its subject in outline shape.

This version of the subjective resemblance theory has various advantages over the previous version. First of all, it is no longer an objective resemblance theory in disguise. For, in mobilizing experiences of similarity, it does not appeal to similarity as a relation between *relata* (experiences, in this case). As a result, this version may sustain that a picture displays its figurative value utterly independently of whether there is something that picture is of (a failure of existential generalization that uncontroversially holds in the case of generic pictures, as we have seen before). For one

may well experience that picture as similar in outline shape to its subject, even if there is no such subject.¹⁴⁴

Moreover, and more importantly, this version avoids the problem that non-linearly perspectival pictures in general raise for the ‘double experience’- version. Like any seeing-as experience, to experience something *as* similar in outline shape to something else does not entail to experiencing *that* something is similar in outline shape to something else.¹⁴⁵ A fortiori, it does not even entail that the first something is similar in outline shape to the second something. Let us consider again any given non-linear perspectival picture, such as one of the Egyptian paintings found in the Tomb of Thutmose IV which presents humans along with several deities. Definitely, as we already know, a painting such as this is not similar in outline shape to its subject; the very same solid angle one subtends to (the relevant part of) the painting – where the lines of the head and of the legs, on the one hand, and those of the torso, on the other, point in different directions – might have been hardly subtended to one of the presented characters, whose head, torso and legs all point to the same direction. Yet this (relevant part of the) painting can well be experienced as similar to that character in such a shape. This is enough in order for all such pictures to be figurative images, as in any other picture.¹⁴⁶



Figure 3.2 Tomb of Thutmose IV, c. 1401-1388 BCE, Thebes (Egypt); ARTStor Collection, Italian and other European Art (Scala Archives)

This is a very brilliant move. Yet we are left wondering whether this experience, insofar as it attempts to provide a necessary condition of depiction, truly yields a sufficient condition of figurativity.¹⁴⁷ Let us again consider perceptually ambiguous pictures such as the ‘duck-rabbit’- picture. Clearly, the two different figurative values of such a picture ensue from the different experiences we entertain when switching from the ‘duckish’ aspect of the picture to the ‘rabbitish’ aspect of the picture and *vice versa*. Yet, since the picture’s vehicle, when seen from a certain perspective, has the same outline shape regardless of its ‘duckish’ or its ‘rabbitish’ reading, it would seem that this phenomenological switch corresponds to just one and the same experience of similarity in outline shape between the picture and its subject. Therefore, experienced similarity in outline shape does not account for figurativity.¹⁴⁸

Hopkins, however, rejects this objection. Let us consider another typical case of an ambiguous picture such as the Necker picture, in which we see the picture first as (a picture of) a three-dimensional cube with a certain face in the forefront and another face in the background, and then as (a picture of) another three-dimensional cube with another face in the forefront and an additional face in the background, or *vice versa*. Definitely, if there really were such different three-dimensional cubes out there, they would have different outline shapes and we would have different experiences of such shapes. But then the same occurs when we face a mere two-dimensional entity such as the Necker picture: even if the picture projects the same outline shape (when seen from a certain perspective), we have two different experiences of outline shape; one experience of an outline shape as similar to the outline shape the first three-dimensional cube would have, and another experience of another outline shape as similar to the outline shape the second three-dimensional cube would have. Moreover, these two experiences precisely match the two experiences we entertain in the phenomenological switch concerning that picture. Therefore, distinct experiences of similarity in outline shape yield the different figurative values of the Necker picture.¹⁴⁹ *Mutatis mutandis*, the same occurs in the ‘duck-rabbit’- picture, as well as in any other ambiguous picture.

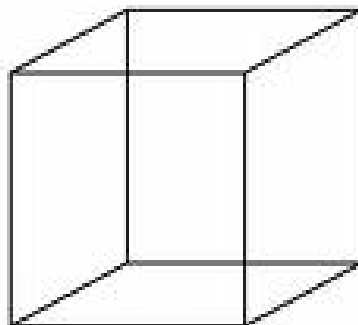


Figure 3.3 The Necker Cube

However, is this reply really generalizable for all ambiguous pictures and for the analogously problematic cases? Some may doubt it. Let us consider a series of three black and white drawings whose figurative value is simply altered by the fact that, drawing by drawing, we change the distribution of the black and of the white spots in them. According to this change, in the first drawing we can clearly discern a Freud-like face, in the middle drawing it is more difficult – perhaps we can start discerning an archipelago – while in the third drawing we can discern no face at all – rather, we can discern an archipelago. Definitely, we have different experiences concerning each drawing; as to the second drawing, moreover, we can have two distinct experiences insofar as the drawing turns out to be an ambiguous picture – we see it first as (a picture of) a Freud-like face, and then as (a picture of) an archipelago, or *vice versa*. In the Necker picture, although the figure remains the same so that it still has the same outline shape (when seen from a certain perspective), the figure-ground relationships of the picture are perceived differently so as to yield two different experiences of similarity in outline shape with the respective subjects of the picture. Yet in our present case the perception of the figure-ground relationships among the picture elements apparently remains the same throughout the three drawings, which also share the same outline shape (when seen from the same perspective). Therefore, it seems that there is no chance to have different experiences of similarity in outline shape (even two of them, in the case of the middle drawing) with the respective subjects of the picture.¹⁵⁰



Figure 3.4 Freud-like face - archipelago (by courtesy of Paola Tosti)

Perhaps Hopkins might reply that, appearances notwithstanding, there are different experiences of similarity involved in a case such as this, as well. Yet given what I said above, it is not easy to see how these different experiences could arise (when we see the relevant picture as (the picture of) a face, do we also see a contour in the part of the picture that is uniformly colored, even though it is not drawn in?), so as to yield the differences in figurativity for the respective pictures.

A related problem arises in the case of another objection to the sufficiency claim. While the aforementioned problem involved how to justify the fact that pictures endowed with a different figurativity bring about different experiences of similarity that are able to account for the difference in figurativity, this next problem involves how to justify the fact that an experience of similarity may arise only when it affects a picture endowed with a certain figurativity. Let us suppose that, after having ingested a drug, a perceiver has a sort of hallucinatory experience while facing a spiral, in which she sees its outline shape as being similar to Henry VIII. Certainly, we would not conclude that, because of this experience, the spiral is now a picture of Henry VIII. Yet it is likely that we would not say that it has gained a ‘Henry-like’ figurative value, either.¹⁵¹

This time, Hopkins would be likely to bite the bullet and reply that there must be some constraints as to how an experience of similarity in outline shape may arise so as to yield a certain figurative value for the item involved in such an experience. Since no

such constraints arise with respect to the case of the spiral, that experience floats free and the spiral has no ‘Henry-like’ figurative value.¹⁵²

So far, so good. Yet this reply obviously prompts another question; namely, what kind of constraints are these? Are they *in us*? If so, are they related to either cultural or biological reasons? Would we have to be trained differently or have a different neuro-architecture in order to ascribe a ‘Henry-like’ figurative value to a spiral, in terms of the relevant experience of similarity? Or do these constraints reside in the picture itself? That is to say, is it the way the spiral is made that prevents us from ascribing that figurative value to it?¹⁵³

Let me take stock once again. Subjective resemblance theories of similarity ultimately maintain that we must experience pictures in a particular way in order for them to have a certain figurative value. In my judgement, they are correct in saying this. As Hopkins rightly says, a pictorial experience has a *distinctive* phenomenology, i.e., a phenomenology that tells it apart from any other perceptual experience.¹⁵⁴ First of all, this distinctive phenomenology arises when we begin to discern something in the picture’s vehicle, or even in what I have called accidental images; or, as we may more properly say, when we begin to see something *in* such an accidental image. Moreover, it is when we begin to have such a seeing-in experience that we begin to consider what we are facing as a picture. Paradigmatically, this happens with all the so-called ‘aspect dawning’- pictures; namely, pictures that we perceive for a long while as being ordinary physical objects, but whose pictorial value we grasp suddenly, once their pictorial aspect ‘dawns upon’ us. Let us consider the following picture of horses.¹⁵⁵ For a long while, by looking at the relevant sketch we are only able to grasp a series of black and white spots in it. Yet, all of a sudden, a certain aspect ‘dawns upon’ us: by focusing on certain contour surrounding some of the spots, certain items emerge in the sketch, namely, the silhouettes of some horses. Therefore, that picture becomes a picture for us only once we *see* something – some horses – *in* it.



Figure 3.5 Some horses (by courtesy of Paola Tosti)

In point of fact, Hopkins' wish is to account for this distinctive seeing-in experience in terms of an experience of similarity in outline shape between the picture's vehicle and the picture's subject.¹⁵⁶ Yet, on the basis of the objections considered above, I find two perplexities with regards to this assimilation. First, I quite frankly wonder whether this assimilation is correct. Second, even if the assimilation were correct, I wonder whether such an experience of similarity could provide a thorough account of figurativity without also appealing to some factors *within* the picture's vehicle that justify the claim that one such experience may give the picture its figurativity, as the objective resemblance theorist may claim. Yet, this would mean that subjective resemblance theories and objective resemblance theories are accurate approaches to depiction only if they are somehow fused into a syncretist approach that opportunely takes both factors they respectively appeal to – objective similarities and proper experiences – into account.

Once this is done, however, we may find that outline shape must not be tossed in a theoretical dustbin, after all. For, although I question whether it works as the relevant respect of an experienced resemblance, it may well contribute to providing the *relata* of the relevant resemblance relation. As defenders of outline shape, or of occlusion shape for that matter, well stress, the outline shape of an object helps us to provide an objective account of what is sometimes called the *profile* of an object, that is to say, of how an object is perceived under a certain point of view. Let us consider one of the most famous examples of such a situation: i.e., the fact that one and the same coin, or

one and the same wheel, can be seen as round from a certain perspective and as elliptical from another. By appealing to occlusion or outline shape, one may well say that these different profiles are nothing but the two occlusion or outline shapes the coin, or the wheel, has in relation to the different points of view from which it is seen.¹⁵⁷ Now, there are certainly also pictures that differ insofar as they present one and the same subject yet under different profiles. As we will see (in chap. VII), a syncretist may thus say that a picture's vehicle depicts its subject only if it resembles that subject (in the relevant respect) under at least one of its profiles, i.e., of its outline shapes.

Chapter IV

Seeing-in, Seeing-as, Recognition and Make-Believe Theories of Depiction

1. Wollheim's Theory of Seeing-in

As it has been brought to light has already come out in the foregoing chapters, we associate figurativity with the fact that we discern something in another thing we face. In the case of pictures, it is common to say that we see something in something else; the second something is the picture's vehicle, while the first something constitutes the picture's figurative content.

Richard Wollheim has elaborated a theory from these commonsensical remarks on multiple occasions. According to him, the mark of figurativity – the necessary and sufficient condition for something to have a figurative value – is the fact that such a very something is the object of a *sui generis* perceptual experience, the experience he calls *seeing-in*.¹⁵⁸ Let me spell out this idea more in detail.

To begin with, in Wollheim's mind, this seeing-in experience is a necessary condition of depiction insofar as it is the mark of figurativity: in order for something to be a pictorial representation, it must prompt such an experience. This experience must be a *shareable* experience; in order for an artist to provide a picture with a certain figurative value, her audience must be able to have the very same seeing-in experience that she herself originally had with the picture. If seeing-in were not intersubjective, the risk of its being a mere imaginative experience would increase. Yet, by itself, this experience is certainly not a sufficient condition of depiction. As both the ancients and the moderns well knew, there are many things that elicit such an experience, though they are not pictures of the additional items that are seen in them respectively. For, even if they have a figurative value just as pictures, when eliciting such an experience, unlike the latter they are not representations of the items one can see in them.¹⁵⁹

I have already recalled (see chap. I) the examples of natural, or better accidental, images: rocks and walls in which faces and battles, respectively, are seen, or even, to add an additional example by Wollheim himself, clouds in which one sees headless

torso.¹⁶⁰ Now, accidental images are the paradigmatic cases of such a situation. Inasmuch as they respectively elicit a certain seeing-in experience, they are endowed with a figurative value just as pictures. Yet they are not pictures of the things one can see in them. For they lack what makes a picture a *representation* of its subject. In a nutshell, although they satisfy the figurativity condition for being a picture, they fail to satisfy the intentionality condition. In my own words, they are just figurative images.

In Wollheim's account, accidental images fail to be representations of the things one can see in them, hence they fail to be pictures of those things. For although something can be seen in them, there is nothing that can be *correctly* seen in them.¹⁶¹ In general, things that have a figurative value fail to be pictorial representations of the items one can see in them insofar as such items are not what is correctly seen in them. Only what is correctly seen in a picture amounts to its subject.

To illustrate this point, let us consider again a picture such as Piero's fresco of St. Louis of Toulouse. As I have already stated, in this fresco one can see not only the bishop of Toulouse, but also Michael Schumacher. Yet clearly, the fresco is a picture *of* St. Louis and not of Schumacher. Why? For the bishop is what one may *correctly* see in it.¹⁶² In the case of an accidental image, the situation is the same, except for the fact that this kind of image is not a picture of *whatever* can be seen in it. For, according to Wollheim, *nothing* is correctly seen in it. Seeing a headless torso in a cloud is a natural tendency for humans, yet a torso is not the *right* thing to see in it, nor is there any other such thing in this case.

For Wollheim, moreover, the correctness criterion is established by the author's intention.¹⁶³ Piero's fresco is a picture *of* St. Louis, as Piero decided so when painting such a fresco. The Martian rock in which one can see a face is a picture of nothing, for no one has planned it to be a picture of that face, or of anything else for that matter. If it turned out that the rock had been sculpted in this way by Martians, as ufologists claim, it would turn out to be a picture of such a face.

To be sure, one can put Wollheim's account of such a criterion into question. For one thing, as it is described, that account rules out transparent pictures of the realm of pictures. For, as I said in chap. I, transparent pictures are pictures about the things

that cause them; so, their aboutness is not intentional, rather it depends on a natural (causal) relation between their vehicles and their subjects.

Yet this is a problem that Wollheim's theory can easily accommodate. As I noted in that chapter, there are various reasons that led us to think that transparent pictures and opaque pictures – pictures that rely on an intentional factor in order to be about something – are not two unrelated kinds of images, but rather are just two species of one and the same kind of images, i.e., pictorial representations. If this is the case, we can simply interpret Wollheim's correctness criterion more loosely. Sometimes the aboutness of a picture is a matter of intentions, while other times pictorial aboutness is a matter of causal relationships, as precisely is the case with transparent pictures. On behalf of the seeing-in theory, we are justified in pursuing this move. For this seems to what he meant by this criterion.¹⁶⁴

There is an independent motivation for such a relaxed approach. Upon closer examination, we find that it is not the case that the aboutness of an opaque picture in question is always settled by authorial intentions, either. Let us consider the famous moai figures, found on Easter Island. We take them to be statues representing the gods of the Polynesian community living on the island before its discovery by the Europeans. Yet who knows? Maybe the artists who sculpted the moai had altogether different intentions regarding this concern. Yet even if one of these artists were to resurrect and told us what he had in mind when sculpting a certain moai, we would most likely continue to take such a statue as a representation of some divinity. For what he had in mind is conceptually too far for us to take it as the statue's subject; or, simply, the statue's final outcome is very far from such intentions.¹⁶⁵ Hence, already in the case of opaque pictures, their intentional aboutness is a matter of negotiation between their producers and their consumers. We clearly saw this point with respect to another case which was taken into consideration earlier, a photo of Madonna taken when the popstar was playing Evita Peron in Alan Parker's *Evita*. While we are in the context of *Evita*, the photo is an (opaque) picture of Evita; while we leave the context of cinema, it returns to be a (transparent) picture of Madonna. Therefore, the aboutness of such a picture is a matter of the context in which we agree to locate it, so to speak. Now, if this

is the case, the seeing-in theorist may take pictorial aboutness as a matter of negotiation *whenever* pictures are at stake. Sometimes natural factors will prevail, as with transparent pictures, while some other times intentional factors will prevail, as with opaque pictures; in the latter case who the master is – the creator or her audience – has yet to be assessed.

That said, let us return to the experience of seeing-in as such, for as we have seen according to Wollheim figurativity consists in having such an experience. Granted, such an experience is a *sui generis* experience, endowed with its own phenomenal character. To begin with, such an experience is utterly different from the experience someone failing to have pictorial competence would have before a picture (or an accidental image for that matter; I will not repeat this alternative in the discussion of pictorial competence that follows). For, while the pictorially incompetent experiencer may only experience a blob of forms and colors when facing the picture, the pictorially competent experiencer will instead see an individual in such a blob, thereby having an utterly different experience.¹⁶⁶

One may surmise that an indisputable case of a pictorially incompetent experiencer is that of a newborn baby who has not yet learned to interact with pictures. Yet the examples do not stop here. For any of us may be a pictorially incompetent experiencer insofar as we fail to grasp the figurative value of what we are facing. Let us return to the case of the picture of horses I discussed at the end of the previous chapter. When facing the picture, for a long while we only grasp a certain blob of black and white patches. Yet suddenly we see some horses in that blob. There is no doubt that at that point our experience dramatically changes, as our verbal behavior may testify. “Aha! Now I see some horses in it”, as we may be impelled to exclaim.¹⁶⁷

One might think that there are other kinds of individuals who are pictorially incompetent experiencers when facing pictures. Let us consider a human being belonging to a tribe that has never traded with pictures who encounters a picture for the first time. Yet, it is very hard to maintain that such a person would merely grasp a blob of forms and colors in such an encounter. Instead, empirical evidence testifies that, if there are such people, in such an encounter they at least seem to see an individual.¹⁶⁸

Therefore, if these people are pictorially incompetent experiencers, they are such for an utterly different reason; namely because, instead of seeing an individual in the picture, they merely mistake the picture for an individual. Once again, there is no doubt that the experience of seeing an individual in a picture and the experience of merely mistaking a picture for such an individual are phenomenally different. For the latter experience precisely is the kind of experience we entertain when we are fooled by a *trompe-l'oeil*; moreover, recovering from such a foolishness precisely amounts to undergoing a phenomenal change when shifting from one's experience of mistaking a picture for a certain individual to the experience of seeing such an individual in it.

Thus, the seeing-in experience is a *sui generis* experience insofar as it precisely falls between the experience of seeing a picture as a mere physical object like any other and the experience of merely mistaking a picture for a certain individual. Yet what does this experience exactly consist in?

In dealing with this question, Wollheim has progressively elaborated essentially the same answer. For him, this experience is not only a perceptual experience, but also, and more significantly, a *twofold* experience, i.e., an experience constituted by two folds: the *configurational* fold, in which one is aware of the picture's vehicle, and the *recognitional* fold, in which one is aware of the picture's subject.¹⁶⁹ In such an experience, one is aware of both the picture's vehicle and the picture's subject insofar as one *can*, or even *must*, attend to the two things at one and the same time. As it has been said in discussing Wollheim, in the former case one will speak of *weak* twofoldness, while in the latter case one will speak of *strong* twofoldness.¹⁷⁰ According to Wollheim, though distinct, these two folds are inseparable. The distinctive phenomenal character of the seeing-in experience indeed ensues from these folds' inseparability.¹⁷¹ It is moreover reasonable to hold that the first fold grounds the second fold: one is aware of the picture's subject in virtue of being aware of the picture's vehicle.¹⁷² Yet it is probably too much for Wollheim to maintain that there is such a dependence relation between the folds. According to Wollheim, over and above ascertaining the folds' inseparability, nothing more can be said in order to qualify the seeing-in experience, which therefore remains utterly ordinary on the one hand and quite mysterious on the other.

2. Gombrich's Theory of Seeing-as

As we will see, Wollheim's theory of seeing-in can be criticized in many different ways. By progressively dealing with these criticisms both in this and in the following chapter, I will try to show how Wollheim's theory can be improved, so as to ultimately serve syncretistic purposes. Let me start by focusing on Gombrich's criticisms.

The most radical critique to Wollheim's theory consists in Ernst Gombrich's claim that seeing-in is neither necessary nor sufficient for figurativity. For rather, in Gombrich's view the mark of figurativity is an utterly different experience: the experience of seeing the picture *as* its subject. To begin with, for Gombrich seeing-in cannot be the relevant pictorial experience, for unlike seeing-in such an experience has no twofold character. Indeed, the experience of the picture's vehicle and the experience of the picture's subject are incompatible. Either one has the former or one has the latter, as anyone who approaches a picture can testify; there is no vantage point from which one can see both things at one and the same time. Either one 'naturally' sees the picture as the physical object it is, or one 'culturally' sees the picture as the interpreted artefact it is, by grasping its subject. Seen this way, the relationship between the former and the latter experience is exactly the same as the relationship that subsists between the two experiences, which I recalled in the previous chapter, of seeing the perceptually ambiguous 'duck-rabbit'- picture either as a duck or as a rabbit: once one sees that figure as a duck, one cannot also see it as a rabbit, and *vice versa*.¹⁷³

Moreover, this comparison between the 'nature'-'culture' confrontation in experiencing pictures and the 'seeing-as' experiences that affect a perceptually ambiguous figure is not accidental. For in these terms, a pictorial experience is precisely a seeing-as experience, the experience of seeing a picture as a certain subject. Once we grasp a picture under the proper vantage point, we see that picture as the subject it represents. This is the experience that replaces the seeing-in experience as the mark of figurativity: something has a figurative value iff it is seen as the subject it represents.

What I have just described is the gist of the so-called *illusionistic* theory of depiction that is generally attributed to Gombrich.¹⁷⁴ As we already know from the previous chapter, any seeing-as experience is non-veridical: one can see something as *F* without that very something's being *F*. Thus, one may well say that seeing a picture as its subject precisely amounts to *mistaking* that picture for such a subject, as it happens in the case of genuine *trompe-l'oeils*, in which we mistake the *trompe-l'oeil* we are actually facing for the subject it represents.

Yet in this rather naïve version the illusionistic theory is even more problematic than the seeing-in theory. Pictures that really fool us are few and far between. It would be rather strange to make the paradigmatic case of depiction something that in our interactions with pictures is quite a marginal case. No obvious strengthening of this version can work, either. For instance, if we were to say that something has a figurative value iff it is mistaken for the subject it represents *if certain conditions obtain*,¹⁷⁵ we might wonder what these conditions are. For instance, it is hard to know what appropriate conditions, let alone ideal conditions, should obtain in order for an impressionist painting, or a black and white photo, to fool its experiencer.¹⁷⁶

Yet a defender of the illusionistic theory may reply that in order for the theory to work, it must appeal to *conscious* illusions. True enough, pictures do not normally fool us. Yet, the theorist may go on to say that even though we are quite aware of the fact that in facing pictures we are not facing their subjects, we are forced to see the former as the latter. In this respect, a pictorial experience works like any ordinary optical illusion, such as the one presented by a crooked oar or by the Müller-Lyer figure. When we are facing a stick partially immersed in water that appears to us to be bent, we well know (because of the testimony of other people or of our other senses) that the stick is not actually bent. Analogously, when we face the Müller-Lyer figure, we well know (for the same kind of reasons) that the parallel segments constituting it have the same length. Yet we are forced to see the stick as bent, as well as those segments as having different lengths.

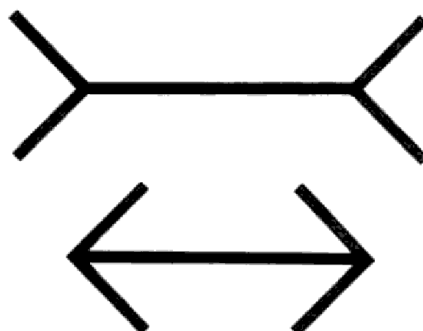


Figure 4.1 Müller-Lyer figure

In other and more abstract terms, in all such cases we still have non-veridical experiences that are not accompanied by corresponding beliefs, unlike the cases in which we are genuinely fooled. Rather, the accompanying beliefs are the opposite convictions that things are not as we see them as being. Therefore, as far as pictures are concerned, the illusionistic theory may ultimately preserve the same idea, once the theory is further refined to say that something has a figurative value iff it is seen as a certain subject although it is not believed to be that subject, but, instead, it is believed to not be that subject at all.¹⁷⁷

Needless to say, no version of the illusionistic theory has ever convinced Wollheim. For in denying twofoldness, each version denies the datum upon which, according to Wollheim, pictorial experience is centered.¹⁷⁸ So, who is right; Gombrich or Wollheim?

3. *Seeing-in Includes Seeing-as*

Yet, perhaps, the above question is ungrounded. Is there any reason to tell seeing-in from seeing-as, as both Wollheim and Gombrich believed, from their respective perspectives? First of all, as various people have underlined, the comparison which Gombrich's critique of twofoldness relies upon is ungrounded. To be sure, seeing the perceptually ambiguous 'duck-rabbit'- picture as a duck is incompatible with seeing it as a rabbit at one and the same time. Yet this incompatibility concerns the fact that *one*

and the same pictorial vehicle cannot be ascribed *different* (experientially grasped) *figurative contents* at one and the same time. As such, this incompatibility is perfectly compatible with the fact that such a vehicle and *one* such content are experienced at one and the same time.¹⁷⁹ Certainly, it is one thing to limit oneself to seeing a vehicle, a physical object like any other, it is another thing to see it as a picture, i.e., as a representation that is about something in a figurative mode; the two experiences are phenomenologically different. Yet, as Wollheim himself underlines, the second experience grounds, if not amounts to, an experience of seeing-in in which both the picture's vehicle and the item constituting a certain figurative content for the picture are grasped. So, seeing such an item in a given vehicle is quite compatible with seeing that vehicle as a certain pictorial representation, for the former depends on the latter. As Wollheim puts it, "seeing y [an item constituting a figurative content] in x may rest upon seeing x as y [a pictorial representation], but not for the same values of the variable y " (1980²:226). As a result, once we 'culturally' see something as a picture, hence we see in it an item constituting a figurative content for it, we can no longer 'naturally' see it *qua* mere physical object.

Moreover, once the illusionistic theory is conceived in accordance with the refinement we have seen at the end of the previous Section, it turns out to be perfectly compatible with Wollheim's theory. For seeing a picture as the item constituting its figurative content, while not erroneously believing the former to be the latter, but rather rightly believing the former not to be the latter, may well become the way of cashing out what the recognitional fold of the twofold seeing-in experience amounts to. In other terms, to experience the picture's subject in that fold is to *knowingly illusorily* see the picture's vehicle *as* a certain item constituting the picture's figurative content, in the sense that one sees that vehicle as that item even though, clearly, the vehicle is not that item, without additionally believing that the former is the latter but rather believing that the former is not the latter.¹⁸⁰ It is easy to see why once conceived as such, the knowingly illusory experience turns out to be the second fold of a twofold experience of seeing-in. For the reason for which seeing a picture's vehicle as a certain item turns out to be a *conscious* illusion is different from the reason an ordinary optical illusion relies

upon. In the case of an ordinary optical illusion, as we have seen before, the illusion becomes a conscious one once one relies on someone's else testimony or on the testimony of another one of her own senses. Yet in the case of a picture, the fact that one is aware of illusorily seeing a picture's vehicle as a certain item depends on the fact that one also awarely sees that very vehicle.¹⁸¹

In order to see that this is the case, let us consider what happens when we recover from the foolishment a genuine *trompe-l'oeil* induces. We are no longer fooled by a *trompe-l'oeil* as soon as we consciously see that we are facing that *trompe-l'oeil* and not the item it presents. At that point, we can still see the *trompe-l'oeil* as such an item. Yet we no longer believe that the *trompe-l'oeil* is that item; instead, we believe the opposite. For we also consciously see that very *trompe-l'oeil*. But this amounts to saying that, with respect to the *trompe-l'oeil*, at that very point we start entertaining a twofold seeing-in experience in which we experience both the picture's vehicle and the item it presents.

Thus, what refined illusionists take as being the only experience one has in facing a picture, i.e., the experience of knowingly illusorily seeing the picture's vehicle as another item, may well turn out instead to constitute just one fold, the recognitional fold, of Wollheim's twofold experience. Unlike other knowingly non-veridical seeing-as experiences, like those featuring optical illusions, such as the experience prompted by the Müller-Lyer figure, this fold does not amount to merely giving something the false experiential ascription of a property which that very something does not possess. Rather, it amounts to knowingly mistaking the picture's vehicle for another item. This is a more radical knowingly illusory experience, more or less the kind we might indeed have not as a fold but simply in isolation in other, albeit non-pictorial, cases, e.g. when we (knowingly) merely mistake a rope for a snake.¹⁸² Thus, we may well say that the *content* of such a fold is roughly that of an experience *as of* that other item, just as we may say that the content of (knowingly) merely mistaking a rope for a snake is simply that of an experience as of a snake. Yet that fold can still be *described* as the (knowingly) illusory experience in which, of a certain pictorial vehicle, we see it to be another item, just as the experience of (knowingly) merely mistaking a rope for a snake

can be described as the (knowingly) illusory experience in which, of such a rope, we see it to be a snake.¹⁸³

All in all, therefore, seeing a pictorial vehicle as another item is for Wollheim the basis of, if not identical with, the twofold experience of seeing an item in that vehicle. In turn, the twofoldness of such an experience amounts to the fact that, first, one sees that vehicle in the configurational fold of that experience, and second, one knowingly illusorily sees such a vehicle as that very item, in the recognitional fold of such an experience.¹⁸⁴ Gombrich's and Wollheim's apparently different positions can thus be reconciled.

At this point, however, Gombrich's point against Wollheim may be restated in a different way. Even if we admit that a pictorial experience mobilizes *configurational* properties, i.e., properties of the picture's vehicle, this does not force that experience to be twofold. Rather, it forces that experience to be an *indeterminate* experience of the picture's subject. At least some of those configurational properties are indeed non-depictive, i.e., they are such that they are irrelevant as to what the picture depicts, so that the picture would depict the same thing even if such properties changed. A typical example of such a situation concerns the real color of the picture's vehicle: insofar as both a black and white photo and its sepia counterpart depict the same scene, *being black and white* is a non-depictive configurational property of the photo's vehicle. Thus, such configurational properties do not enter the content of the pictorial experience, for such a content is instead constituted by the properties ascribed to the picture's subject. Yet, by doing so, these properties cause the latter properties to be indeterminately given in such an experience. True enough, in our experience we can even end up focusing on the configurational properties themselves. Yet this amounts to having a vacillating experience of the kind Gombrich predicted. Either we have an indeterminate experience of what the picture depicts or we have a determinate experience of the vehicle's configurational properties. Yet we cannot have both things at one and the same time.¹⁸⁵

To be sure, a Wollheimian may acknowledge that, insofar as there is a dependence of the recognitional fold on the configurational fold of the seeing-in experience, the less fine-grained the content of the latter, the less fine-grained the

content of the former. Consider *La Gioconda*, on the one hand, and a stick figure of a woman, on the other hand. Definitely, the content of the recognitional fold of the seeing-in experience involving Leonardo's masterpiece is less generic and more detailed than the content of the recognitional fold of the seeing-in experience involving the stick figure. Moreover, this difference in content definitely depends on the fact that the canvas of Leonardo's masterpiece has many more properties to be grasped in the configurational fold of the seeing-in experience involving it than does the ink patch constituting the stick figure's vehicle which is to be grasped in the configurational fold of the seeing-in experience involving it.

Yet, the Wollheimian may proceed to say that it is one thing to ascribe a certain indeterminacy to the content of the recognitional fold of a seeing-in experience, while it is quite another to ascribe an indeterminacy to a pictorial experience in the mode in which it presents what it depicts. The first thing has to do with the fact that the content of a recognitional fold may well be *incomplete*, in the sense that, for many pairs made by a property *F* and its complement *non-F*, that content does not include either of the two. The second thing has to do with the fact that, however rich the content of an experience is, it is given through an interfering, or even occluding, factor, as typically happens when one is wearing dirty eyeglasses.¹⁸⁶ Certainly, the Wollheimian might remark, a pictorial experience may well be indeterminate in the second sense. Yet she would add that, *pace* Gombrichians, in one such pictorial experience configurational properties certainly do not play such an interfering and occluding role. For, instead, in such an experience they figure as what is affected by such an interference, just as properties ascribed to the picture's subject. If we were to look at the picture through a veil, whatever this veil is, not only the latter, but also the former properties would be affected by such an interference in such a way that both properties would be given indeterminately. In the most extreme case, if the interfering factor is an opaque object utterly occluding the picture, as in the case of a stone placed between the perceiver and the picture, completely occluding the picture for the experiencer, *neither* kind of properties would be grasped any longer. As one may well expect, if the pictorial experience is a twofold experience, as the Wollheimian claims. Thus, even if there may

be indeterminacy in the pictorial experience, this brings no grist to the Gombrichian mill.

4. *Is Seeing-in Necessary for Figurativity?(I)*

As we have seen, there is room for the seeing-in theorist to dispense with the most radical objection from Gombrich. Yet, an objector may go on to say that, even if the above Wollheimian defense may render Wollheim's seeing-in sufficient for figurativity, it still does not mean that it is necessary. Let us again consider genuine *trompe-l'oeils*, as Lopes suggests. As Wollheim himself admits, they do not elicit a twofold experience, for they are simply mistaken for their subjects. Yet they are pictures like any other. Figurativity cannot, therefore, consist in Wollheim's seeing-in experience.¹⁸⁷

As is well known, to this Wollheim bit the bullet and replied that, insofar as genuine *trompe-l'oeils* elicit no twofold experience, they have no figurative value, hence they are not pictures at all.¹⁸⁸ Taken as such, this reply may sound rather *ad hoc*. Yet it can be suitably motivated, as we will now see.

To begin with, Wollheim's reply only concerns *trompe-l'oeils* that are not recognized as such. For, as we have seen, *trompe-l'oeils* that are recognized as such do involve a twofold experience – this is what that recognition actually amounts to. By eliciting a twofold experience, they do have a figurative value, hence they are pictures like any other.¹⁸⁹

As such, however, this reply only shows that *trompe-l'oeils* recognized as such are no longer genuine *trompe-l'oeils*. Yet even though at this point genuine *trompe-l'oeils* turn out to be very few, their problem remains: although they elicit no twofold experience, why should they be ruled out of the pictorial realm?

My first reply to this restatement of the problem is to consider the cases of three-dimensional *trompe-l'oeils*. For such cases clearly show that only *trompe-l'oeils* recognized as such have a figurative value that allow them to count as pictures. Let us consider manikins and puppets, which I take to be the paradigmatic cases of three-dimensional *trompe-l'oeils*. When do they work as pictures? Undoubtedly, only when

they are recognized as manikins and puppets, that is, only when they are no longer erroneously taken as humans or as animals, respectively. A manikin is the picture of a human only once it is recognized as a manikin, that is, only once it no longer deceives people into being erroneously taken for a human. The same occurs with a puppet. Yet, for a manikin (or a puppet), being recognized as a manikin (or as a puppet) precisely amounts to being surrounded by a twofold seeing-in experience, in which the (this time knowingly illusory) experience of seeing the manikin as a human (or the puppet as an animal) is flanked by the experience of seeing the manikin (or the puppet) itself. Now, two-dimensional *trompe-l'oeils* are in the same boat, so to speak. That is, two-dimensional *trompe-l'oeils* count as pictures only once they are recognized as such, i.e., they are surrounded by a proper twofold seeing-in experience.

This reply may well suit Wollheim. For, by originally providing cases of accidental images among the most intuitive cases of seeing-in, he was prompted to include three-dimensional items in the pictorial realm. As I stated earlier, for him the only reason why a cloud, which is definitely a three-dimensional item, is not a picture of a headless torso, despite the fact that a torso is seen in it, is that no one sculpted it as a torso, hence no one enabled it to meet the correctness criterion that contributes to making it a picture, by giving it a certain intentionality.

Yet not all theorists who are involved in the discussion about depiction would accept three-dimensional items as being genuine cases of depictions.¹⁹⁰ In chap. VII, I will provide several reasons as to why three-dimensional items may also be genuine pictures. Yet for the time being, let me suspend judgement as to whether three-dimensional items, manikins and puppets recognized as such, are pictures. So, our problem still remains: in order for something to count as a picture, why must it be recognized as such, in such a way that *trompe-l'oeils* not recognized as such do not count as pictures? To illustrate the same problem from a different and more general perspective, recognizing a picture as such by entertaining an appropriate seeing-in experience involving it may be too subjective of a criterion in order for it to count as a picture. For such a recognition may come and go, while, intuitively at least, the picture such a recognition involves remains the same pictorial item. In this respect, let us again

consider *trompe-l'oeils*. What if, after having recognized a *trompe-l'oeil* as such, one were to again be tricked by it? Would the *trompe-l'oeil* no longer count as a picture?

Now for my second reply. First of all, let us consider what are known as puzzle pictures. Puzzle pictures are drawings in which, only once a certain pattern is completed – typically, by linking multiple points through a continuous line – a certain figure emerges, say a cat or a turtle. As we can easily see, puzzle pictures are simply particular instances of what I have already called at the end of the previous chapter ‘aspect dawning’- pictures, patterns that must be seen in a particular way in order for a figure to emerge in them, like the aforementioned picture of horses. As I have already said, in this case, by looking at the relevant sketch for a long while, we are only able to grasp a series of black and white spots in it. Yet, all of a sudden, a certain aspect ‘dawns’ on us. By focusing on a certain contour surrounding some of the spots, a certain item emerges in the sketch; in the case in question, a group of horses. Now, in all such cases it is evident that the items involved do not count as pictures until they are recognized as such; that is, until they are seen as such by letting additional items emerge in them (via either a physical or a phenomenological completion of the picture’s vehicle). But, as Wollheim himself originally understood (as I said above), for such pictures to be seen as pictures precisely amounts to entertaining a certain twofold seeing-in experience as regards them. In such an experience, while seeing the picture’s vehicle, one also experiences the item that picture presents, by (as I can now say) knowingly illusorily seeing that vehicle as such an item.

Moreover, such an experience has no ‘halo’ of subjectivity, for it is not reversible. Once we grasp the pictorial value of such a picture, we cannot go back to the experience we previously entertained when facing the picture; the phenomenology of our experience dramatically changes once and for all. From that point forward, whenever we face a picture, we are no longer ‘naturally’ immersed in the mere experience of a physical object, for we are ‘culturally’ immersed in the contemplation of a *picture*.

Now, to my mind ‘aspect dawning’- pictures are the paradigmatic cases of pictures, for they clearly show how something may come to possess a figurative value. So, in their being paradigmatic as to what makes something count as a picture, ‘aspect dawning’- pictures ultimately show why only *trompe-l’oeils* recognized as such count as pictures. For, unlike *trompe-l’oeils* not recognized as such, they are surrounded by a twofold seeing-in experience. Moreover, also such an experience is not reversible. Once the recognition enables us to realize that we were merely undergoing an illusion, we cannot go back to experiencing that mere illusion. For we have come to grasp the *trompe-l’oeil* canvas in a way that prevents us from returning to our previous merely illusory state.

Lopes would further object that, appearances notwithstanding, there is no real twofoldness in the experience of the pictures that I take as paradigmatic: ‘aspect dawning’- pictures.

To begin with, Lopes observes that as to a picture’s vehicle in general, there are two kinds of visible surface properties that we can relevantly grasp in the perception of the picture’s vehicle, which Wollheim takes to be the configurational fold of the seeing-in experience. Some properties of this kind are responsible for the fact that a certain item is seen in the picture: these are the *design* properties of the vehicle. Other properties of this kind do not bear such a responsibility: these are the *merely visible surface* properties of the vehicle.¹⁹¹ Standard examples of the latter properties are properties that affect the material status of the vehicle’s surface: e.g. *being cracked*, *being wooden*, *being opaque*. Standard examples of the former properties are colors and shapes of the vehicle. I say “standard”, as sometimes one can find properties that work as design properties even though they normally work as merely visible surface properties. Let us consider, for example, properties such as *being made of ink*, or *being made of oil*. With respect to ink sketches and oil temperas, they work as design properties, not as merely visible surface properties as we may expect. Or we might take Alberto Burri’s crettoes: their cracks are responsible for what one can see in them.¹⁹²

Moreover, according to Lopes, design properties must be visible independently of our seeing anything in the picture. Yet this is not what happens with ‘aspect

dawning'- pictures. For at least some of the alleged design properties of the picture, those having to do with its internal contours, are visibly grasped only insofar as we see something – e.g., some horses – in the picture. As a result, in the case of these pictures there is no real twofold experience of seeing-in, but just a pseudo-experience of that kind.¹⁹³

I accept Lopes' distinction between merely visible surface properties and design properties, although as I just stated, I take it as a functional distinction. Granted, moreover, contour properties such as the ones mobilized by 'aspect dawning'- pictures cannot be visually grasped independently of seeing something in a picture. For once we visually grasp them we also see something in the picture. Yet, to me, Lopes' independence requirement for design properties seems ungrounded. For, *pace* Lopes, the order of the explanation goes in the opposite direction: it is in virtue of visually grasping contour properties as the relevant design properties of a picture's vehicle that one sees a certain item in that vehicle, not the other way around. For these design properties are not only responsible for the fact that a certain item is seen in the picture, as much as the 'traditional' design properties – the vehicle's colours and forms – are. Unlike these other design properties, they are also responsible for the fact that such an item emerges in the picture. This is why one cannot see these design properties without also seeing that item in the picture. As a consequence, the seeing-in affecting an 'aspect dawning'- picture is really a twofold seeing-in.

In point of fact, Lopes himself had once recognized contour properties as design properties.¹⁹⁴ To be sure, he might say that the contour properties that 'aspect dawning'- pictures mobilize are not the contour properties he originally had in mind. For, unlike the latter, they are subjective – such contours are not physically traced onto the vehicle.¹⁹⁵

Yet the physical realization of a contour makes no difference in order for a contour to work as a design property, as in a case in which it is not physically traced. For there can be 'aspect dawning'- pictures even when contours are physically traced. It is the fact that such contours are attended to in a new way that make them responsible not only for the fact that a certain item is seen in the relevant picture, but also for the

fact that such an item emerges in the picture, just as in the ‘horses’- case. The map of the Paris Underground is full of pictures no one had been aware of before focusing our attention on lines that were already there on the map. Take, for instance, the following head of a flamingo:¹⁹⁶

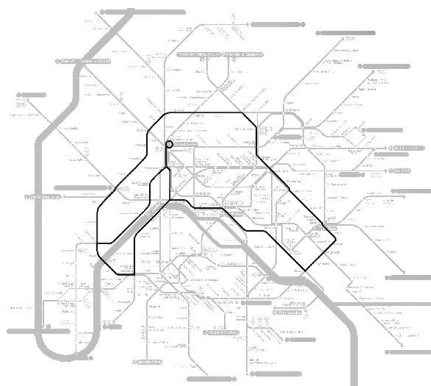


Figure 4.2 A flamingo head in Paris' Underground map (by courtesy of Paola Tosti)

However, Wollheim's objector is not yet satisfied. For even if she were to accept that 'aspect dawning'- pictures are affected by a truly twofold seeing-in, there are still other pictures that are not. These are the so-called *naturalistic* pictures, a very broad kind of pictures that covers both the sophisticated paintings in which an experiencer is caught up by the highly subtle and realistic details of the representation – such as Jan Van Eyck's *The Arnolfini Portrait* – and ordinary pictures such as postcards and snapshots (including sexually moving pictures such as pornographic images¹⁹⁷). Now, unlike genuine *trompe-l'oeils*, naturalistic pictures certainly do not fool us. Yet, Wollheim's objector goes on to say that they prompt no seeing-in experience either, for the experiencer focuses her attention merely on the items these pictures present. Once again, like genuine *trompe-l'oeils*, the experience surrounding any of these pictures is just the illusory experience of seeing the picture's vehicle as such an item. To be sure, unlike genuine *trompe-l'oeils*, the illusory character of such an experience is recognized as such. Yet, unlike 'aspect dawning'- pictures and non-naturalistic pictures in general, such a knowingly illusory experience is not prompted by the aware perception of the picture's vehicle.¹⁹⁸ More precisely, in such cases the merely visible surface properties

of the vehicle are properly experienced. This is why naturalistic pictures are not genuine *trompe-l'oeils*. Yet the vehicle's design properties are not properly experienced.¹⁹⁹

On behalf of Wollheim, one might here note that, if in the case of a naturalistic picture only the vehicle's merely visible surface properties are experientially grasped, this is enough in order to say that in such a case, over and above the proper experience of the item constituting the figurative content of a picture, there is also the proper experience of the picture's vehicle, hence there is genuine seeing-in. Yet, in point of fact, as to naturalistic pictures, we cannot say that the vehicle's design properties are not properly experienced. Certainly, some of them may not be *attended* to by the picture's perceiver. For instance, it may well be the case that while watching a soccer game on television one does not notice the trapezoidal shape on the screen depicting the rectangular penalty area of the field; definitely, the trapezoidal shape on the screen is one of the design properties of the relevant pictorial vehicle, i.e., the tv screen itself.²⁰⁰ Yet first, one can definitely attend to one such design property – in the above example, one can definitely attend to the trapezoidal shape on the tv screen, even if it was not previously focused on. Moreover, even if one does not attend to such a design property, this does not mean that one is not perceptually aware of it – simply put, phenomenal awareness and attention do not go hand in hand. In Wollheim's terms, when this is the case there is simply weak, rather than strong, twofoldness.²⁰¹ So, all in all, not even naturalistic pictures turn out to be counterexamples to Wollheim's thesis.²⁰²

At this point, Wollheim's objector may make a more radical move. Empirical evidence from cognitive sciences shows that there is even *unconscious* pictorial understanding. For instance, there are eminegligent individuals who grasp the pictorial value of what they are facing on the left-hand side of their visual space although they have no awareness of such a grasp (they indeed say that they perceive nothing, or nothing relevant, on that side). So, they recognize pictures as such, yet they have no conscious experience, let alone a twofold experience, of them.²⁰³

To be sure, if there really are cases of 'unconscious pictures', in order to account for them Wollheim's theory must undergo a certain revision. A Wollheimian can no longer maintain that the mark of figurativity is a distinctive *experience*. For in the above

cases pictures are involved and yet the relevant individuals have no experience of them. Yet she can still maintain that the mark of figurativity is a distinctive, though unconscious, mental *state* that precisely preserves the twofold character of the corresponding experience. Indeed, what the relevant experiments in cognitive science show is that the individuals involved in such experiments are sensible both to the vehicle of the picture they unconsciously face and to the item that, unbeknownst to them, that picture presents, just as they would if they consciously faced that picture. In one of these experiments,²⁰⁴ eminegligent individuals face both a picture of a house and another partially similar picture of another house which, unlike the previous picture, presents the corresponding part of that house to be on fire on its left-hand side (the one they fail to consciously see). If such individuals are asked whether they see any difference between the two pictures, they invariably say no. Yet first, if they are asked in which of the two presented houses they would rather live, surprisingly enough, they respond with the first house, the non-burning one. Moreover, their further non-verbal behavior is not affected by their answering that they dislike the second house, the burning one; for instance, in facing the picture of the burning house they are neither shocked nor try to run away. Yet this is what should happen if such individuals were deluded, albeit unconsciously, by such a picture. All of this shows that, though unconsciously, they have a twofold mental state in which they grasp both the vehicle of the picture of the house on fire and the item that picture presents, just as they would if they consciously saw that picture.²⁰⁵



Figure 4.3 Two houses (by courtesy of Paola Tosti)

5. *The Recognitional Theory*

Let me take stock. In appealing to putative counterexamples – genuine *trompe-l'oeils*, naturalistic pictures, unconscious pictures – to Wollheim's idea that the *sui generis* experience of seeing-in is the mark of figurativity, the objector wishes to positively show that, instead, such a mark is a more basic capacity of recognition of the picture's subject. This capacity may (but does not have to) manifest itself in an experience that lies behind both veridical experiences of that subject, such as factive perceptions of it, and non-veridical experiences of it, such as illusory or hallucinatory perceptions of that subject, as well as pictorial experiences of it: the experience *as of* that subject, to put it in Lopes' terms.²⁰⁶ In fact, the core of the recognitional theory says that something is a depiction of something else only if it triggers the very same capacity of recognizing that something else which that very something else would prompt when seen face to face.²⁰⁷

Now, as a necessary condition of depiction,²⁰⁸ the above condition would probably be fine for Wollheim himself. For, since he says that the experience of seeing-in has a recognitional fold as its second fold, he would have acknowledged that by means of that experience one can recognize the picture's subject just as one can do by looking at that subject face to face. Yet it is hard to see how a seeing-in theorist can go from holding that such a condition is a necessary condition of depiction to holding that it is a necessary and, above all, sufficient condition of figurativity.

To be sure, we might well think that a pictorial liability to recognize a certain item is a more sophisticated capacity than a straightforward liability to recognize that very item: recognizing a three-dimensional item in a picture that is typically two-dimensional is certainly more complicated than recognizing it face to face. In this respect, on behalf of the recognition theorist, we may suppose that the former kind of liability has a more articulated implementation than the latter form of liability. Regarding this concern, we may exploit the results from cognitive sciences that say that object perception results from two components. The first component has to do with

object *identification*, which allows us to tell one object from the other objects surrounding it and thus to identify it. The second component is a *motion-guiding* component, which enables us to physically grasp that object by giving the peripheral areas of our motion system the right grasping commands. Notoriously, these components are implemented in different visual areas of the human brain. The first implementation takes the *ventral* pathway, for it goes from the occipital lobe to the temporal lobe of the brain, while the second implementation takes the *dorsal* pathway, which goes from the occipital lobe to the frontal lobe through the parietal lobe.²⁰⁹ For, on the basis of this empirical result, we may further distinguish ordinary pictorial perception from object perception. One can indeed say that, unlike the latter case, in the former case the identification component is mobilized *twice*; that is, both with respect to the picture's vehicle and with respect to the item we see in it – in such a perception we identify both things – while the motion-guiding component is mobilized only with respect to the picture's vehicle – we can grasp the canvas we are facing, but we do not even attempt to grasp the item we see in it, for we know it is not there.²¹⁰

Yet appealing to such an articulation would be useless for the recognition theorist. For insofar as she believes that even pictures not recognized as such – typically, genuine *trompe-l'oeils* – count as pictures, the recognitional capacity relevant for figurativity would not be so articulated. For it must not discriminate between ordinary pictures and pictures not recognized as such. (If an individual is really fooled by a *trompe-l'oeil*, we may expect that not only her 'dorsal', but also her 'ventral' perception is mobilized just once, since both perceptions are illusorily directed towards the thing that is not there, even if they are actually connected with the *trompe-l'oeil* as such.) Yet such a generic recognitional capacity hardly provides sufficient conditions of figurativity. We are misled by genuine *trompe-l'oeils* – say, a *trompe-l'oeil* of a snake – just as we are by ordinary things that we mistake for other things – in the classical skeptical example, by ropes that we mistake for snakes. Thus, we presumably mobilize the same recognitional capacity manifested in an experience as of a snake in both cases, the very same capacity we would mobilize if we were to face a snake. Yet it is hard to say that by merely inducing people to make such mistakes, ropes have a figurative

value, notably the very same figurative value that *trompe-l'oeils* of snakes allegedly have.²¹¹

Moreover, even if the recognition theorist were to bite the bullet and implausibly said that whatever has a delusive import also has a figurative value, it would still be difficult to assess that figurativity merely consists in one such recognitional capacity. If figurativity were a mere matter of recognitional capacities, it would follow that, if we had different recognitional capacities (for instance, if we were hard-wired in a radically different way), we would also recognize things in our standard, non-modified, verbal signs and therefore ascribe to those signs a figurative value as well. Yet this conclusion is very hard to swallow. In a nutshell, the recognition theorist commits a ‘subjectivist’ fallacy analogous to the fallacy a subjectivist on colors would commit if she were to say that colors are subjective properties, since humans do not see colors that other animals see (e.g. infrared or ultraviolet). True enough, our brains have to have developed up to a certain point in order for us to understand what makes something possess a figurative value (just as they should develop further in order for us to see infrared or ultraviolet). Lower-order mammals, for instance, are definitely unable to understand pictures. Yet this does not mean that for something to have a figurative value means that such a value is in the eye of the beholder (or that for something to be a color means that it is such a color in the eye of the beholder). Rather, it means that having the right recognitional capacity enables us to grasp certain properties of the things that have that value (as much as having the right chromatic capacity enables us to grasp chromatic properties of the things that have it). Evidence of this lies in the existence of pattern poems or of nominal silhouettes in general, as in the “Hitchcock”- example I provided at the end of chap. II. All things being equal, especially our recognitional capacities, it is the sign that must change in order for it to have a figurative value. In the “Hitchcock”- example, the sign must take a different form: the very name “Alfred Hitchcock” has to be differently shaped.

All in all, therefore, a theory that hopes to account for figurativity in terms of mere recognitional capacities is doomed to fail. Up until this point, we have seen no reason to relinquish the seeing-in theory, which acknowledges that recognitional

capacities are necessary but not sufficient for depiction, hence for figurativity, insofar as it holds that the twofold seeing-in experience has a recognitional fold. The analysis I have hitherto provided of such a fold, in terms of a knowingly illusory state of seeing a picture's vehicle as the item that picture presents, is befitting for this acknowledgment. For seeing a picture's vehicle as such an item certainly shares the general feature of being a state as of that item with other perceptual states about that item, both veridical and non-veridical.²¹² As we have seen before, this latter state is what for recognition theorists manifests the capacity of recognition of that very item. To be sure, it may sound strange to say that one recognizes an item in a picture if the recognitional fold is the non-veridical experience of seeing the picture's vehicle as such an item, for "to recognize" is a success verb.²¹³ Thus, it would be more proper to say that such a purported recognition is a *misrecognition*. Yet, even in order to misrecognize something, one must activate the capacity of recognizing that very something, as the recognition theorist would even acknowledge.²¹⁴

6. *Is Seeing-in Necessary for Figurativity?(II)*

Yet even if the seeing-in theorist accommodates the previous putative counterexamples to her claim on figurativity, further cases remain that allegedly show that seeing-in is at most a sufficient, but not a necessary, condition of figurativity. In all cases of seeing-in, the picture's vehicle is a material object that has its own look, its own way of appearing to the individual perceiving it. Moreover, it may well be the case that such a look of the picture's vehicle matches the look that the picture's subject possesses, as it paradigmatically happens in the case of a copy that depicts the object it copies. Yet an opponent of seeing-in as the mark of figurativity may well claim that there are additional things that depict their subjects and that therefore have a certain figurative value, which still have no look of their own. Indeed, they limit themselves to merely presenting the appearances of such subjects. Such things that merely present the appearance of another thing are not material, but merely phenomenological, entities; visible things, *visibilia*. Holograms are the typical cases of such *visibilia*. Moreover, by

merely presenting the look of their subjects, for such an opponent, they are pictures *par excellence*. For, she says, such a presentativity is what figurativity in general consists in. Indeed, other pictures are *pictorial* representations only insofar as they approach *visibilia*. Thus, although in these other pictures – reflections (typically mirror images), shadows and screen pictures, tv pictures and photographs, and hand-made pictures – a look of their own progressively emerges, they are still figurative only insofar as they present the look of another thing. For the simple fact that, as I have just stated, these additional pictures have a look of their own, unlike *visibilia*, they allow for a seeing-in experience: by looking the way they do, they also present the look of another thing. As a result, the opponent claims, seeing-in is sufficient, but not necessary, for figurativity. For insofar as *visibilia* are not material objects, experiencing them involves no configurational fold, no experience of a picture's vehicle.²¹⁵

True enough, holograms are not material objects, if this means that they do not have the features that typically qualify material objects – weight, above all. As Michael Martin puts it, they are not solid objects.²¹⁶ Yet this does not mean that they are not there in the physical world *as physical items*, if this is what being a phenomenological entity is supposed to entail.²¹⁷ Holograms are the outcome of certain physical phenomena of light projection, as much as mirror images, shadows and screen pictures are the outcome of physical phenomena of light reflection upon certain surfaces. Thus, it is hard to understand why holograms should not have an appearance of their own, just as all those other entities. For one thing, they can well be perceived as mere blobs of colors and forms, over and above their being perceived as having a certain figurative value. As any of us can trivially remark, most of our pets, and perhaps even our newborn babies, pass in front of mirrors and screens without having the typical reactions of those who grasp the figurative value of the images such devices project. This may clearly be seen if we focus on *visibilia* that have no figurative value, like rainbows. Such *visibilia* present nothing. Yet they certainly have a look of their own.

To be sure, it may well be the case that in such appearances, holograms and the like happen to be very similar to the appearances of the things they present. Yet this does not mean that they have no appearances of their own, or even that such

appearances are stolen, so to speak, by the things they present. If the appearances of the latter things are (*inter alia*) captured in a proper recognitional fold,²¹⁸ the appearances of holograms and the like are still captured in a proper, and admittedly unnoticed, configurational fold. Granted, in seeing holograms and the like, it is hard for us to notice such appearances. We seldom focus on the merely visible surface properties of all such devices, and even more rarely on their design properties. Yet this does not mean that we have no phenomenal awareness of such appearances, hence it does not rule out that our overall experience with holograms and similar images is twofold insofar as it grasps both them *qua* pictorial vehicles and the relevant pictorial subjects. Rather, it simply means that, like the experience of naturalistic pictures, the twofoldness of our overall experience of such devices is *weak*. For, even if we do not *attend* to them, we are still phenomenally *aware* of them.²¹⁹

Moreover, insofar as holograms and similar images present something, they are also partially attended to in a strong way. For the difference between *visibilia* that present nothing and *visibilia* that present something traces back to an attentional difference. This may clearly be seen if we consider that the experience of a *visibile* that had hitherto presented nothing may undergo a phenomenal change once we realize that such a *visibile* presents something, as well – like an ‘aspect dawning’- picture. Let us suppose that a rainbow were to appear around a face-like rock. All of a sudden, we may see a face surrounded by a halo *in* the setting made by the rock and the rainbow – it’s a saint’s face, we might exclaim.



Figure 4.4 A saint's face with a halo around it (by courtesy of Paola Tosti)

Granted, all such devices are transparent pictures, if this expression is used in the manner in which I have used it all along, namely in order to mean that the fact that such pictures have the subject they have is settled causally, not intentionally. As we have seen both in chap. I and before, this does not mean, however, that they are a special kind of pictures that are utterly separated from opaque pictures. Insofar as this is the case, these devices elicit a seeing-in experience just as the latter pictures.

Clearly, things would be different if the fact that such devices are transparent meant that grasping the things they enable us to grasp is the outcome of a phenomenologically different perceptual state, or in other terms, that those things are not seen in, but *seen through*, them. People who maintain that there is a difference in kind between transparent and opaque pictures precisely appeal to this difference in phenomenology in order to ground the above difference.²²⁰ Now, when a device is such that something else is seen through it, we may well say that such a device has no appearance of its own but that it limits itself to presenting the appearance of the thing seen through it. Yet, when this is *really* the case, the device has no figurative value at all! Consider lenses, which are often taken as the prototypical case of transparent things in the sense of letting other things be seen through them.²²¹ In wearing my contact lenses, I have no phenomenal awareness of them, I merely have phenomenal awareness of the things they let me see. So, I well agree that such lenses limit themselves to presenting the appearance of something else. Yet in doing so, they have no figurative value at all. *Mutatis mutandis*, the same holds true of my old spectacles. The more I have phenomenal awareness of them, the less they let me see further things. It is only when I have no phenomenal awareness of them at all that they let me see something else in its entirety. Hence, they also have no figurative value at all.

Yet, as I have just said, holograms and similar images are not transparent in *this* sense. All in all, therefore, not even holograms and similar images constitute counterexamples to seeing-in as the necessary condition of figurativity.

7. *Where Are We Now?*

Even if we have found no real counterexample to seeing-in as a necessary condition of figurativity, we may still wonder what we have taken for granted up until this point, by following Wollheim, i.e., whether seeing-in provides *sufficient* conditions of figurativity.

In order to answer this question, we must better understand what the seeing-in state really consists in. By merely saying that this state is made by the aforementioned inseparable folds – the configurational fold in which one apprehends the picture’s vehicle and the recognitional fold in which one apprehends the picture’s subject – Wollheim says too little on this concern. Notoriously, many people have reproached him for this explanatory paucity.²²² Hyman radicalizes this critique by remarking that, if properly assessed, seeing-in cannot provide an analysis of depiction. For the seeing-in account is desperately circular, insofar as seeing something in a picture is seeing that something *depicted*.²²³

There is a grain of truth in what Hyman says. For, as we have seen before, one may consider Wollheim himself as saying that to see something in a picture’s vehicle is to see that vehicle as a *picture* of that something. Yet even if this turned out to be just a preliminary step in a Wollheimian characterization of seeing-in,²²⁴ it would remain that Wollheim’s remarks on this matter are too elusive. For one thing, the recognitional fold so vaguely conceived may also be an imaginative state. Yet clearly enough, seeing something and imagining something else in virtue of that seeing is not enough in order for that first thing to possess a pictorial value.²²⁵ On the basis of looking at the word “pear”, I imagine a pear. Definitely, this does not mean that such a word has the figurative value of a pear. The same goes for any of our dimwit politicians if, when looking at one, I still imagine a pear. True enough, these cases are very far from the case in which one clearly faces a picture of a pear. Still, if there is no criterion to perceptually tell this case apart from the former cases, we risk that the overall state accompanying any of them is too generic in order for it to be the mark of figurativity.²²⁶

To be sure, Wollheim insists that, though phenomenologically *sui generis*, the seeing-in experience is a *perceptual* experience as a whole. In particular, for him we really *see* what such an experience displays in its recognitional fold, be it a picture or merely an accidental image, although we do not see it in the very same way in which we would see it if it were presented to us face to face.²²⁷ Yet, once again, the problem consist of how to justify such an insistence. If by looking at a certain thing we were to suffer from a hallucination in which we experienced another thing, we would surely entertain something more perceptual than a mere visually-prompted imagination; yet we would still not be legitimated in saying that what we look at has a figurative value.²²⁸ The morale is that there must be some constraint in order for the seeing-in state to be a genuine perceptual state that further works as a mark of figurativity. This is, in a way, acknowledged by Wollheim himself when he says that, in order for the author's intentions to settle what one can correctly see in a picture, such intentions must provide something that the picture's audience can really see in it.²²⁹ Yet in the context of Wollheim's theory it is not clear what that constraint may be. What makes it the case that it is *impossible* for an appropriate spectator to see in a picture the object an author intends to be seen in it, as Wollheim himself says?²³⁰

In the foregoing sections of this chapter, when dealing with the illusionistic theory I have said that there is a way to combine it with the seeing-in theory once we conceive the recognitional fold of the seeing-in state as a knowingly illusory state of seeing the picture's vehicle as the item that picture presents. Definitely, this conception makes us better understand what the recognitional fold amounts to. For such a seeing-as state is surely perceptual in character and yet it is different from a genuine perception of a given thing. Moreover, I also noted that there must be a dependence between the two folds: it is in virtue of perceiving the picture's vehicle in the configurational fold that someone can grasp a different item in the recognitional fold of the seeing-in experience. Yet much more remains to be said on these topics. In expanding my reflections on this matter, we will see that, although a seeing-in state is a necessary condition for something to be a depiction hence for something to have a figurative value, it is not a

sufficient condition for that something to have that value; something more must be added. To see what, let us proceed to the next chapter.

Chapter V

More on Seeing-in

1. The Nature of Seeing-in

As I said at the end of the previous chapter, in order to settle whether seeing-in may really work as the mark of figurativity, we must better understand what seeing-in effectively consists in. In order to do so, we have to assess what type of mental state seeing-in is. Generally speaking, two factors are relevant in order to individuate a type of mental state. First, the state's having a *mode* – whether it is a sensuous state, and in such a case what kind of sensation (either an esteroceptive sensation: a visual, an auditory, an olfactory, a gustative, a tactual sensation, or a proprioceptive sensation – typically, a kinaesthetic sensation – or even an interoceptive sensation: an itch, a pain, a tickle ...), or a non-sensuous state, a thought, and in such a case what kind of thought (a belief, an expectation, a desire ...), or even something in between (an emotion or a mood). Second, the state's having a *content* (if any), i.e., the fact that it is about something or it is assessable for truth and falsity.²³¹ Thus, if Wollheim is right in holding that seeing-in is a perceptual state, we must first assess how both its mode and its content, respectively, can be the mode and the content of a perceptual state.²³² Moreover, if seeing-in is a twofold state, we must assess how such a mode and such a content can be distributed between its folds. Finally, we have to assess how such folds are related. For, as Wollheim himself stresses by claiming that such folds are inseparable, seeing-in clearly is not the mere juxtaposition of two different states, the apprehension of the picture's vehicle and the apprehension of the item that picture presents. Rather, these folds must be integrated in such a way that allows the recognitional fold to depend on the configurational fold.

2. The Content of the Recognitional Fold is the Picture's Figurative Content

In order to approach all such (undoubtedly related) problems, let me begin with a question whose answer, as we will see, yields the first contribution to settle the issue of the content of seeing-in. For this answer enables the seeing-in theorist to supply the recognitional fold of seeing-in with a certain content, hence to provide a certain figurative content to a picture. As I have already suggested, for the seeing-in theorist the two contents are quite the same: the figurative content of the picture, what articulates the fact that a picture is an image with a figurative value, is the same as the content of the recognitional fold of a seeing-in state concerning such a picture.

In one of his few attempts at clarifying what seeing-in is, Wollheim says that in the recognitional fold “I discern something standing out in front of, or (in certain cases) receding behind, something else” (1987:46). John Hyman asks whether this something else is either the very pictorial surface, in such a way that the involved spatial relations hold in the actual space lying in front of the perceiver, the space also containing the picture’s vehicle, or it is a background belonging to the depicted scene, in such a way that, we may add, such spatial relations hold in a non-actual, or better non-present, space, in the sense that the scene whose constituents are so located occurs non-actually, or at least non-presently.

To begin with, speaking of a scene here is quite appropriate. I have hitherto limited myself to speaking of what is seen in a picture, more properly in the recognitional fold of the relevant seeing-in state, as an item that the picture presents. Yet it is more appropriate to speak of what is seen in a picture as a *scene* that is constituted by the interaction of different items. This is, as a whole, the figurative content of the picture. Whenever possible, in the remainder of this book I will speak of what is seen in a picture in terms of a scene rather than in terms of an item or even of a plurality of such items.

However, Hyman concludes that neither of the above alternatives is appealing. The space in question cannot be the first space, for the above spatial relations concern the scene seen in the picture and such a scene is not located in the actual portion of space containing the picture’s vehicle as well as the picture’s perceiver, the present space. There is hardly a continuity between this portion of space and the space the items

constituting that scene occupy. Clearly, therefore, the background is a depicted background that belongs to the depicted scene; hence, we may add, the space involved must be the second space, as Wollheim himself originally suggested when talking of a “pictorial dimension” in which, as regards what is seen in the picture, certain figure-ground relationships hold.²³³ Yet, Hyman goes on to say that if this is the case then once again seeing-in cannot be the mark of figurativity. For there are pictures – stick figures, Mesolithic paintings, ancient Greek decorations – whose subject is not articulated in terms of *three-dimensional*, depth-involving, figure-ground relationships.²³⁴ In an alternative formulation of the same point, Hyman asserts that in a stick figure “the unmarked surface does not contribute [to] the picture’s content: it is a ground but not a background” (2012b:116).

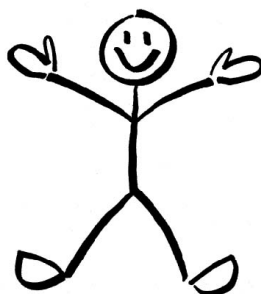


Figure 5.1 A stick figure

Now, I completely agree with Hyman that the spatial relationships affecting what is seen in the picture are depicted relationships, if this simply means that they occur in a scene that is not *actually there*. For, as we saw in the previous chapter, the seeing-in theorist must say that, *qua* illusory, the recognitional fold of the seeing-in state is non-veridical. Thus, although the perceiver sees the items in the presented scene as present, i.e., as being out there in the actual portion of space she faces, those items are not actually located there, they are elsewhere – either in the sense that they are actually somewhere else, as with transparent pictures, or in the sense that they are there merely possibly, as with many opaque pictures.

Yet, I find Hyman to be mistaken when he says that at least sometimes pictures do not present three-dimensional scenes. For these scenes always involve a dimension of depth. In the scene that is seen in the picture, its main item always stands out from a background, even if sometimes that background is not populated by further items. *Pace* Hyman, the unmarked surface of the picture *does* contribute to the picture's figurative content: it provides the part of the scene seen in the picture that yields the environment where the main, if not the only, character of the scene is located.²³⁵

In point of fact, the misleading impression that what one can see in a stick figure is just an item on a ground only relies on the circumstance that one can really see in it an empty background that occupies the furthest position in the relevant non-present space and yet has the same color as the body of the very item one can see in the figure. Indeed, that item visually emerges, typically, by drawing a closed line on a differently colored surface (typically, a black closed line on a white surface). Let us suppose instead that the relevant line on the picture's vehicle indeed circumscribes a geometrical figure that is filled with the same color of the line, while what lies outside that line on the vehicle is differently colored. In this case, the main item one can see in a stick figure is presented as standing in front of an empty background, which nonetheless belongs to the same scene that contains that item. Let us consider, for example, the following figure.²³⁶



Figure 5.2 Another stick figure

To be sure, on behalf of Hyman one might put into doubt that in the above case the differently colored part of the vehicle presents a *background* for the main item the stick figure presents. But this doubt is clearly ill-founded. Some perceptually ambiguous pictures clearly ground their perceptual ambiguity on the fact that one merely reverses the perceptually relevant reading of what counts as the presented background and of what counts as the main item standing out from it. Let us take e.g. the Rubin vase.

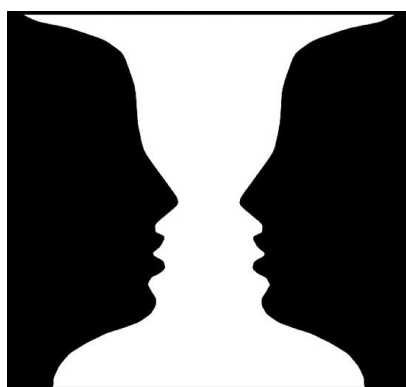


Figure 5.3 The Rubin vase

Clearly, in this case two perceptually relevant readings of the picture's vehicle are available, depending on which of the two colors in the vehicle is taken to present the background out from which the item presented by means of the other color stands: black (as presenting the background out from which a white vase stands) or white (as presenting the background out from which two black faces in profile stand).

Finally, even in merely ordinary black and white stick figures not only the lines that determine a contour that presents something standing in front of a background, but also the lines that are drawn *within* such a contour present a volumetric piece of a scene. In the following black and white mini stick figure, in order for us to see two eyes in it we have to see them as standing *before* the front of the face it presents. If such a figure turned out to be a perceptually ambiguous picture that one can see either as a face or as an electrical outlet, in it the two black dots that now present two eyes would then present two holes that stand behind the surface of that outlet.



Figure 5.4 mini stick figure

All in all, therefore, a survey of the above cases reveals that the recognitional fold of a seeing-in state always presents an articulated content, namely a scene in a non-present space whose elements are related in a three-dimensional way. To be sure, we will have to wait until the next chapter in order to find a justification as to why this *must* be the case. Yet for the time being, on behalf of the seeing-in theorist I can assert that, since, as we have seen in the previous chapter, the recognitional fold is also a knowingly illusory seeing-as state, such a state amounts to seeing the picture's vehicle as certain items to be featured by certain properties, above all spatial ones. Since this state is illusory, although it presents a certain scene as present, that scene is actually non-present; to be specific, it is a scene in which things unfold as they do not presently unfold.²³⁷

Yet Hyman would still be dissatisfied with this result. For, he says, even if we admit that the recognitional fold has such a content, we can no longer treat the seeing-in experience as the mark of figurativity. For this would amount to implausibly accounting for *how* a picture represents in terms of *what* it represents.²³⁸

Now, if Wollheim's position amounted to saying that ascribing a certain figurativity to a picture, i.e., the fact that it has a certain figurative value, depends on ascribing it a certain intentionality, i.e., the fact that it has a certain representational content, I would agree with Hyman that this may well be a genuine drawback for such a position. Returning to a case that I have repeatedly discussed in the previous chapters,

both the name “Alfred Hitchcock” and its logo (whether drawn in a ‘nominal’ way or in the standard linear way) stand for the British director. Thus, it cannot be the case that *what* the logo represents accounts for *how* it represents such a subject, i.e., for the *pictorial* way the former represents the latter. For what a *non-pictorial* representation such as the name “Alfred Hitchcock” represents is precisely the very same subject.

Yet I doubt that Wollheim’s position amounts to accounting for the pictorial way a picture represents its representational content in terms of its having such a content. Surely, Wollheim holds that a picture’s having a certain figurative value consists in its having a certain figurative content. For, insofar as he claims that a picture’s having a certain figurative value amounts to being surrounded by a certain seeing-in experience, he equates that figurative content with the content of the recognitional fold of that seeing-in experience. Yet, as I already said in chap. I, the figurative content of a picture does not coincide with its representational content. Rather, the figurative content of a picture is broader than its representational content. For the former merely puts a constraint on the latter. Insofar as the latter is a selection from the former, whatever the representational content of a picture is, is also a *pictorial* content for it, namely a content that must accord with its figurative content. Therefore, the seeing-in theory does not make the representational content of a picture account for its figurative value.

Let us again consider Piero’s well-known fresco. As I have repeatedly stated, it is a picture of St. Louis of Toulouse. Yet, in it one can see St. Louis as well as Michael Schumacher (as well as a few other things). It is a picture of St. Louis for the simple fact that we have agreed upon it, in accordance with Piero’s intentions on the matter. In a different cultural situation, that very fresco would have been a picture of Schumacher. Therefore, the fresco’s figurative value is established by the fact that one can see St. Louis as well as Schumacher in it (as well as a few other things), so that being either St. Louis or Schumacher (or ...) constitutes the fresco’s figurative content. Yet it is not established by the fact that such a fresco is a picture of St. Louis, which instead yields the fresco’s pictorial content.

Perhaps some confusion on this matter has arisen on this matter due to the fact that Wollheim is not very clear when he says that what one *can* see in a picture can also

be what one *should* see in it, namely the correct thing to be seen in it. For it might seem that, by further holding that what one *should* see in the picture is its pictorial content, Wollheim equates that content with the picture's figurative content, which is what one can see in it. Indeed, we might say on Wollheim's behalf that the pictorial content of a picture simply *is* its figurative content once the latter is assessed as being the correct thing to be seen in such a picture.²³⁹ As a result, it would turn out that if one were to see in the picture what was not the correct thing to be seen, the picture would have a different figurative content. This content would amount to a different pictorial content for the picture if different decisions had been made (on the author's part) with respect to the subject of the picture.

Yet this is not the right way to put things. First, insofar as it is fixed by a *certain* seeing-in state, a picture still has the same figurative content independently of whether one says that one sees a certain thing rather than another thing in it. In other terms, even if someone says that she sees a certain item in a given picture, instead of another item she could see as well in it, while someone else says that she sees that other item in that picture instead of the first item she could also see in it, these people have the same seeing-in state that fixes a certain figurative content for that picture. Indeed, the picture's having a *certain* figurative content is constituted by the fact that a certain range of things can be equivalently seen in it. Second, once one of these things is selected as what one *has* to see in it, this selected thing contributes to constituting the picture's pictorial content, or, equivalently, it contributes to transforming an image with a certain figurative value into a pictorial *representation*, something that has a certain representational content. Therefore, *what one can see in* the picture – its figurative content, something the picture might have even if it were not a picture but a mere accidental image with a figurative value – is one thing, while the pictorial content of such a picture – what is selected from the broader content to be the picture's *subject* – is another, narrower, thing. Having a subject is what transforms a mere accidental image into a picture by allowing it to have a certain intentionality, to be a pictorial representation *of* something. What one can see in a picture's vehicle, the picture's figurative content, must therefore be clearly distinguished from the picture's subject,

what is selected out of that figurative content in order to be the picture's pictorial content. When a picture's figurativity is at issue, the *first* kind of content is relevant; when a picture's intentionality is at issue, the *second* kind of content is relevant. Both the figurative content, *qua* identical with the content of the recognitional fold of a seeing-in state involving the picture, and the pictorial content of a picture are genuine contents. The latter clearly makes the picture assessable in terms of truth and falsity; the former explains why the recognitional fold is (knowingly) non-veridical. Yet in putting a constraint on the latter, the former is more generic than the latter.

Going back to the case of Piero's fresco once again, the fact that in it one can indifferently see both St. Louis and Schumacher (and perhaps something else, as well) shows that the relevant seeing-in state is that of seeing in the fresco *a man of a certain kind*. The fact that a seeing-in state has precisely this content, or better yet, that it has this content in its recognitional fold in which the fresco's vehicle is seen as such a man, also establishes the figurative content of that fresco. As such, this content constrains the proper representational content of the fresco, its *pictorial* content, i.e., its having a certain subject; namely, its being about St. Louis (rather than Schumacher), for this is what we have decided by agreeing with Piero's intentions on that matter.

A strict Wollheimian may be surprised to hear this. Is there no phenomenological difference between seeing a certain item *x* in a given picture and seeing another item *y* in it? In Wollheim's own original example,²⁴⁰ when in facing a painting by Hans Holbein one no longer sees Henry VIII in it, as one normally does, but one happens to see the British actor Charles Laughton in it, does one not entertain a phenomenological change? Yet one is right in saying that one is entertaining phenomenally different pictorial experiences with respect to a certain picture only when a perceptually ambiguous picture is at stake. For in such a case there are indeed different seeing-in states that respectively correspond to the different ways one sees such a picture: insofar as one sees the picture either in one way or in another one, one sees either an *x* or a *y* in it. When a picture is not perceptually ambiguous, as is the case with Holbein's painting, the mere saying that one can see both an *x* and a *y* in it does not prove that different seeing-in states are mobilized, but rather that one and the same

seeing-in experience whose recognitional fold provides a content – the very figurative content of the thing one is facing – that is broader than one would have expected, goes on being mobilized.

Let us go back to the ‘duck-rabbit’- picture, which is the paradigmatic case of a perceptually ambiguous picture. Granted, in experiencing such a picture one undergoes a phenomenological switch corresponding to a shift from seeing it in a certain way – the ‘duckish’ way – to seeing it in another way – the ‘rabbitish’ way. Now, when one sees that picture *one* way one has a *certain* seeing-in experience, which corresponds to the fact that in seeing that picture (in the configurational fold), one sees it as a duck (in the recognitional fold), while when one sees that picture *another* way one has *another* seeing-in experience, which corresponds to the fact that in seeing that picture again (in the configurational fold), one sees it as a rabbit (in the recognitional fold). Thus, in such a case we are right in saying that different seeing-in experiences are involved with one and the same picture. For such experiences precisely correspond to the phenomenological switch that affects one’s overall experiential confrontation with that picture. Yet let us now consider Piero’s fresco once again. Unlike the ‘duck-rabbit’-picture, this fresco is not a perceptually ambiguous picture. Indeed, in experiencing such a picture we undergo no phenomenological switch corresponding to a shift from seeing it in a certain way to seeing it in another way. Thus, by saying that we can see St. Louis as well as Schumacher in the fresco, we point to no phenomenological switch occurring while experientially confronting ourselves with the fresco, hence to no different experiences. Rather, we point to the fact that what we see in the fresco is any such individual, or better, a certain generic content, what we can also describe as *being a man of a certain kind*. *Mutatis mutandis*, the same holds true of the ‘Madonna-Evita’-picture, but for the fact that, unlike Piero’s fresco, it is *actually* a merely ambiguous picture. Despite its different (contextual) referents, Madonna and Evita respectively, hence its different pictorial contents, we always see in it *a woman of a certain kind*.

So, on the one hand, a perceptually ambiguous picture is such that it has different figurative contents, because of the different seeing-in states that surround it, hence, a fortiori, different pictorial contents. Yet, on the other hand, while a merely

ambiguous picture certainly has different pictorial contents, it has just one figurative content, for the seeing-in state surrounding it remains one and the same.

Thus, the figurative content of a picture – what one can see in the relevant seeing-in state – and its pictorial content are different things, the first being broader than the second. Let me put this differently. On the one hand, the figurative content of a picture contains the properties one may perceptually discern in the generic scene it presents. For instance, in Piero's fresco, the property of *being a fleshy individual*, if not even the property of *being a human face*. On the other hand, the pictorial content of a picture also contains the perceptually indiscernible properties of the picture's subject that are compatible with the previous properties – to stick to the example of Piero's fresco, the property of *being a bishop*.²⁴¹

Now, the distinction between the figurative and pictorial content of a picture is widely recognized in the literature on depiction. It is, however, hard where to draw the line between the two kinds of contents.²⁴² For, according to some, figurative content is a very thin kind of content (basically, patterns of light), such that it is very far from pictorial content,²⁴³ while, for others, that content is definitely thicker, so that the distance between figurative and pictorial content is definitely smaller.²⁴⁴ Now, if one suitably agrees with Wollheim that seeing-in is the mark of figurativity, then one sides with the latter kind of people. From a Wollheimian perspective, the figurative content of a picture amounts to the content of the relevant seeing-in state, or better yet, to the content of the recognitional fold of such a state one entertains with respect to such a picture. Since for Wollheim this latter content is rather rich, figurative content, from this perspective, is rather thick.

With regards to this concern, it is also important to stress that the distinction between the figurative and pictorial content of a picture is *orthogonal* to the distinction between the *singular* and *general* pictorial content of a picture, the pictorial contents that a picture about something and a generic picture respectively possess. By focusing again on the example of Piero's fresco, we might get the impression that the figurative content of a picture is always general – indeed, the fresco presents *a man of a certain kind* – while the pictorial content of a picture is always singular – indeed, the fresco is a

picture of *St. Louis*. Yet, while the first part of that impression is correct, as I hinted at above this does not hold true of the second part of that impression. For with respect to a generic picture as well, one may draw a distinction between figurative and pictorial content, the former being again broader than the latter. Let us once again consider stick figures, which are generic pictures *par excellence*. In the first silhouette illustrated above in this chapter, what we see in it is simply a human. This is the silhouette's figurative content, which it would have even if it were a natural image; undoubtedly, a very generic thing. Yet, we may additionally take it as still being a generic picture, but of a completely naked human, or even as a generic picture of a human wearing gloves and shoes (as well as countless other things). If we agree, say, on the first interpretation, then the silhouette counts as a generic picture of a completely naked human. What makes the silhouette a pictorial *representation* is its having a pictorial but still generic content. Thus, when a pictorial content is singular, it is correct to say that the relevant picture is about, refers to, a particular individual, as in Piero's fresco. Yet, when such a content is generic, there is no such reference.²⁴⁵

3. *The Content of Seeing-in*

Yet, even if we were to establish the content of the recognitional fold of a seeing-in state, much more about seeing-in still has to be investigated. How is this content related to the content of the configurational fold? More generally, how are the two folds with these contents related to each other? Are such folds mental states of the same kind, or not?

Let us examine these problems in more detail. Let us suppose, as I have just said, that the recognitional fold of seeing-in is the apprehension of a content that amounts to the figurative content of a picture. In its turn, the configurational fold of seeing-in is the genuine successful perception of the picture's vehicle along with its properties. So described, it seems that seeing-in is just the outcome of two different states, each with its own content. Yet this can hardly be the case. For the two folds of seeing-in are not only inseparable, as Wollheim himself underlines, but also such that

the latter somehow depends on the former, as I stated earlier. Consequently, the contents of the two folds must somehow be connected. Yet how can this be the case, if the determinations that feature the content of the configurational fold and the determinations that feature the content of the recognitional fold are incompatible? Let us go back to Piero's fresco once again. How can the content of the recognitional fold, roughly *there is a man of a certain kind*, be compatible with the content of the configurational fold, roughly *there are certain marks on a wall with certain colors and forms*? In this respect, incompatibilities abound. How can one grasp, by means of the above folds, something that has incompatible colors, shapes, and sizes – for instance, something that is both black & white and colored, both elliptical and spherical, both flat and deep at one and the same time?²⁴⁶

On behalf of Wollheim, one might try to answer the above question as follows. Definitely, the above problem would arise if the seeing-in state were just a joint perception that unites what one captures in the configurational fold with what one captures in the recognitional fold. For such a joint perception would then have somewhat of a contradictory content. Yet this is not the case, for, although the two folds are aspects of one and the same state, they are different folds *per se* each having its own content. For the fact that one has a perception with a fold that *p* and another fold that *non-p* does not mean that one is perceiving that *p* and *non-p*. So, it may well be the case that some features are ascribed to the picture's vehicle in the configurational fold of seeing-in, while some quite opposite features are ascribed to what is seen in the picture in the recognitional fold of such a state.²⁴⁷

Yet this answer only takes the problem one step further. How can what I said above be the case, insofar as the configurational fold is a genuine successful perception of something while the latter, being a non-veridical perception of that very something as something else, is still a perception as of that something else? Are not both states still perceptual (notably, visual) states, as Wollheim himself was eager to maintain? Hence, must not their content be somehow integrated? Yet how can this integration be possible if such contents contain incompatible determinations?²⁴⁸

If we wish to stick to the idea that seeing-in is the distinctive pictorial experience,²⁴⁹ there are at least four ways to deal with the above problem. The first way is the most radical one, a *unitary* approach. A seeing-in state is not really twofold, it is just described as such: the two folds are just abstractions of a unitary, admittedly *sui generis*, state endowed with just one content. The second and the third way are rather *divisive* approaches. First of all, the two folds of the seeing-in state have a psychological reality. Moreover, either they are still different in mode – the second way – or their content is not so dangerously incompatible as it seems – the third way. Finally, such an alternative may be exclusive, as in the aforementioned positions, or inclusive: the folds are both different in mode and their content is not so dangerously incompatible – the fourth way. Let me consider these ways in their respective order.

Hopkins is the main defender of the first, unitary, approach. In point of fact, as we have already seen in chap. III, for him a seeing-in experience amounts to an experience of resemblance, the experience in which the picture's vehicle is seen as being similar in outline shape to the picture's subject. This is just one experience endowed with just one content: in its phenomenal specificity, it is about the picture's vehicle as similar in outline shape to the picture's subject.²⁵⁰

In chap. III, I wondered whether experienced resemblance in outline shape provides sufficient conditions of figurativity. To be sure, such an insufficiency does not undermine *per se* the unitary account of seeing-in. For one might defend another such account by equating Wollheim's seeing-in with a further kind of mental state. Kulvicki seems to be a case in point.²⁵¹ For he holds that seeing-in amounts to the experience in which one sees the picture's vehicle as if it were transparent so as to let one see the items that constitute the seen-in scene through the vehicle itself, as lying behind that vehicle in one and the same portion of space.²⁵²

This way of putting things construes the seeing-in state as an illusory state, whose unitary content is somehow impossible – in no nomologically possible world can a vehicle made of the same physical features that actually qualify it be transparent with respect to what allegedly lies behind it.²⁵³

In and of itself, this construal is not a drawback. For, insofar as the seeing-in state is taken as an illusory state, it may well ascribe certain impossible features to what it is about.²⁵⁴ The real drawback of this proposal is something else; namely, that it captures the content of the seeing-in state incorrectly. In such a state, the picture's vehicle is not perceived as being *in front of* the items constituting the seen-in scene. This would be the case if the vehicle worked as a closed window *behind* which the seen-in scene articulates itself. Yet this is not the case.²⁵⁵ For the distance from the seer at which the vehicle is seen in the outer space is *identical* with the distance from the seer at which a certain item of the seen-in scene is seen as standing in that very space out of all the other items of that scene. By looking at a Paul Cézanne's still life, we may well say that certain apples seen in it are as close up as much as its vehicle is, while others are off in the distance.²⁵⁶ Given such a drawback, it is hard to renounce the idea that the seeing-in folds have a psychological reality, by thus having different contents.

Let us see whether a divisive approach may deal with the above problem concerning the incompatibility of the content of the two folds. First of all, it may be that the two folds are different in mode. While the configurational fold is a genuine successful perception of the picture's vehicle, the recognitional fold amounts to a different kind of mental state. Kendall Walton seems to defend this variant of the divisive approach. According to Walton, first of all, the recognitional fold may be interpreted as involving a particular instance of make-believe. By means of that fold, one makes believe that the perception of the picture's vehicle, the state one entertains in the configurational fold, is the perception of the picture's subject.²⁵⁷ For Walton, moreover, make-believe can generally be interpreted in terms of prescriptions to imagine, hence as a mixture of normative and mental elements.²⁵⁸ Furthermore, in order to capture Wollheim's claim that the recognitional fold, hence the whole seeing-in state, is a sort of perceptual state, for Walton the imagination that is involved in a make-believe perception must be given a perceptual flavour as well.²⁵⁹ Now, the only plausible way to do this is to account for imagination, at least in the case in question, in terms of mental imagery, hence in terms of *visualization*. All in all, therefore, to make believe that the perception of the picture's vehicle is the perception of the picture's

subject entails visualizing that the perception of such a vehicle is the perception of such a subject. As a result, interpreting seeing-in in this way amounts to ascribing two different modes to the two folds. For, on the one hand, the configurational fold of seeing-in is a genuine veridical perception, notably the perception of the picture's vehicle. On the other hand, the recognitional fold of seeing-in merely has a perceptual flavour, for it involves the visualization that the above perception is the perception of the picture's subject.

For Walton, such a visualization ultimately amounts to visualizing *of* the first perception that its content is different from the content it actually has.²⁶⁰ Now, insofar as a perception having a certain content co-varies with its having a certain phenomenal character, the 'what is like' of such a perception, such a visualization also amounts to visualizing *of* that perception that it has a different phenomenal character. Yet insofar as either content or phenomenal character are essential for a mental state such as a perception, to visualize of a perception that it has both a different content and a different phenomenal character is to visualize an impossibility. But to visualize an impossibility can hardly have a perceptual flavour. For, as we have already seen from our discussion in chap. I, we can hardly perceive the impossible.

To be sure, Walton may weaken his claim and limit himself to saying, as indeed he sometimes does, that the relevant make-believe activity involves the perception of the picture's vehicle merely as a *prop*. This means that what is really true of the perception of the picture's vehicle determines certain make-believe truths as regards the perception of the picture's subject. From such a perspective, the perception of the picture's vehicle is no longer make-believedly the perception of the picture's subject. Rather, it simply prompts one to make-believedly perceive such a subject.²⁶¹ Yet once Walton's position is so weakened, the latter make-believe perception may well involve one's visualizing the perception of the picture's subject, yet it can no longer provide a mark of figurativity. For *pace* Walton,²⁶² even the perception of a written text rather than that of a picture's vehicle may work as a prop in a make-believe activity that again involves one's visualizing the perception of the picture's subject. While reading a verse of the *Iliad*, that verse may prompt us to visualize ourselves as perceiving Achilles

killing Hector, just as seeing an ancient Greek vase may induce such a visualization.²⁶³ In either case, therefore, what is really true about the perception of what one is really facing may determine what is make-believedly true about the perception of what one is not really facing. Thus, this way of pursuing the divisive approach is doomed to fail.²⁶⁴

At this point, we may assess whether the second divisive approach fares better than the first approach of this kind. In other terms, we may hold that the contents of the two seeing-in folds are not as dangerously incompatible as they seem. Hopkins himself contemplates such a move by ascribing it to Lopes (2005). First, according to such a move, the configurational fold is the perception of the picture's vehicle as having not only certain merely visible surface properties, but also design properties. As we already know from the previous chapter, these are the vehicle's properties that are responsible for the fact that some additional item is seen in the vehicle. Second, the fact that in the configurational fold not only merely visible surface properties, but also design properties of the vehicle, are perceived should explain why an altogether different item is grasped in the recognitional fold.²⁶⁵

As a whole, this move claims that the configurational fold must be adequately enriched in its content in order to understand why in its turn the recognitional fold has the content it has. Now, this would seem to be the right move to make. I think, however, that it must be performed in a different way than what Hopkins has in mind. According to Hopkins, the content of the configurational fold has to be enriched by mobilizing design properties that are already in the picture's vehicle and still conceived as such, i.e., conceived as being responsible for the fact that a certain item is seen in the picture's vehicle.²⁶⁶ Yet as regards to such an enrichment, Hopkins has in mind the traditional design properties, i.e., the vehicle's colors and forms. I, however, think that such an enrichment must contain *further* design properties over and above the traditional ones, still conceived as such.

Again, the case of perceptually ambiguous pictures suggests precisely such an option. As we have seen before, any such picture mobilizes different seeing-in states. Such states are different primarily because their recognitional folds are different in content. For instance, one such state involving the 'duck-rabbit'- picture can be at least

provisionally described as seeing *a duck* in the picture, hence as having a recognitional fold to the effect that the picture is (knowingly illusorily) seen as a duck, while another such state can be at least provisionally described as seeing *a rabbit* in the picture, hence as having a recognitional fold to the effect that the picture is (knowingly illusorily) seen as a rabbit. Yet moreover, such recognitional folds can be different only because, appearances notwithstanding, the configurational folds of such states are different in their respective contents, as well. Besides, one must locate this difference in some different design properties of the ‘duck-rabbit’- picture that are respectively grasped in those configurational folds. Granted, such configurational folds grasp not only the same merely visible surface properties of the ‘duck-rabbit’- picture but also some of its design properties, the shared ones: typically, its colors and forms. Yet in accordance with the above difference in the recognitional folds of those experiences, there are some other design properties of such a picture that are respectively grasped in the configurational folds of such states. Thus on the one hand, when the recognitional fold of the relevant seeing-in state consists in seeing the ‘duck-rabbit’- picture as a duck, the perception that constitutes the configurational fold of the ‘duck-rabbit’- picture grasps *certain* further design properties of that picture, whereas on the other hand, when the recognitional fold of the relevant seeing-in state consists in seeing the ‘duck-rabbit’- picture as a rabbit, the perception that constitutes the configurational fold of the ‘duck-rabbit’- picture grasps *other* further design properties of that picture. Yet we do not need to appeal to ambiguous pictures in order to grasp this point. For ‘aspect-dawning’- pictures show the very same point. Even in their case, what amounts to the configurational fold of the seeing-in state is no longer the same as the perception of the picture’s vehicle taken in isolation. For once that perception is folded, one grasps *further* design properties of such a vehicle. This enables the second fold of the seeing-in state, the recognitional fold, to emerge as well. In the aforementioned picture of horses, once we grasp further design properties of its vehicle, we are also able to see it as a group of horses.²⁶⁷

All in all, therefore, the recognitional fold of such a state consists in seeing that vehicle as a *certain* thing precisely because in the configurational fold of that state one grasps *certain* specific design properties of the picture’s vehicle.²⁶⁸

Identifying which design properties are decisive with regards to this concern is a matter that will be dealt with in the next chapter. For the time being, however, suffice it to say that such properties have to be determinant for the fact that the relevant recognitional fold comes out as having the content it has. As to the ‘duck-rabbit’-picture, the different design properties that are respectively mobilized by the configurational folds of the two relevant seeing-in states affecting that picture have to be respectively determinant as to the fact that the first recognitional fold amounts to seeing the picture as a duck, while the second recognitional fold amounts to seeing the picture as a rabbit.

However, Hopkins goes on to note that such a move lets the defender of a divisive approach make no real progress. For an incompatibility remains between the contents of the two seeing-in folds. The recognitional fold presents the items featuring the picture’s figurative content as real, that is, as both actually existing and being out there in front of the seeing-in bearer. Yet once the content of the configurational fold is enriched by the relevant design properties, it follows that the aforementioned items are “nothing but a figment of our pictorial consciousness” (2012:654). So all in all, in the seeing-in state as a whole such items are presented as real and as unreal in the respective folds: there remains a contradiction.²⁶⁹

To be sure, the contradiction in question may be less radical than it turns out to be in Hopkins’ description. In the seeing-in state as a whole, the very same items are both given in the recognitional fold as being present (as being in front of the seeing-in bearer) and given in the configurational fold as being non-present; the issue of their actual existence may well be out of scope. Yet, there must be such an admittedly less radical contradiction. Insofar as the recognitional fold of seeing-in is a sort of perceptual state, one may well say that the item featuring the picture’s figurative content is given as being present. In general, perceptual states are different from, say, imaginative states because, unlike the latter, they give the items featuring their content as being present. As I hinted at before while discussing Kulvicki’s proposal, the items in question are both given in the recognitional fold as occupying a certain range of the outer space from a position closer to the seer to a position more distant from her and given in the

configurational fold as not occupying that very range, in which the position closer to the seer is rather given as being occupied by the picture's vehicle. Moreover, in the recognitional fold the above givenness is non-veridical, for the ascription of presentness to the items featuring the picture's figurative content is comprised in the illusory character of such a fold. The picture's vehicle is illusorily seen not only as certain items, but also as certain items that are present. Thus, while the configurational fold gives the presence of the picture's vehicle veridically, the recognitional fold gives the presence of the seen-in scene non-veridically. This scene does occupy the same amount of space as the picture's vehicle, yet not in the actual world, but in unactual ones. Furthermore, such an overall illusion is a knowingly illusory perceptual state: its bearer well knows that things do not stand as that state takes them to be. Besides, unlike other knowingly illusory states, such a fold is so recognized as illusory precisely because the fold's bearer also perceives the picture's vehicle in the other fold, or better yet, as I can now say, the picture's vehicle along with its relevant design properties. Briefly put, such a recognition relies on the fact that the seeing-in bearer also entertains the configurational fold of her seeing-in state with such an enriched content. Thus, the item knowingly illusorily given as being present via one fold, the recognitional fold, is also veridically given as non-present via another fold, the configurational fold, for in this latter fold the picture's vehicle is veridically given as being present. In point of fact, this is why, as I have just said, the recognitional fold displays an actually non-present scene, a scene non-actually taking place in that very portion of space facing the seeing-in bearer that the picture's vehicle actually occupies. For the configurational fold already veridically displays a present scene precisely concerning the picture's vehicle, a scene actually occupying that very portion of space.

All in all, therefore, there is still an air of contradiction between the contents of the two folds. Yet if the second fold is known as illusory precisely because the first fold is a veridical perception having the (enriched) content it has, such a contradiction is precisely what one may expect.

We should note that a similar situation also occurs in the case of other complex, knowingly illusory seeing-as experiences that, unlike seeing-in states, do not involve

twofoldness. First of all, let us consider what goes on with *expressive* experiences, the states in which we experience that the object of our experience has some expressive properties. In particular, let us suppose one hears a piece of music as sad. By so presenting a piece of music, such an auditory experience also presents that piece as a bearer of emotions. Yet since, over and above hearing the music's sadness, the experiencer also veridically hears that music as such, i.e., as a sound that, unlike say a voice, does not come from a bearer of mental states, she also well knows that such a hearing-as experience is illusory. Although she is forced to hear that piece of music as sad, she well knows that that very piece of music is not sad, for she precisely hears such a piece of music to be a piece of music veridically, as well. Thus, a certain contradiction is an intrinsic feature, so to speak, of one such overall experience: the music is non-veridically presented as sad, but it is also veridically presented as not sad. To be sure, this is an admittedly complicated case, for it involves the disputable ideas that both pieces of music and their expressive properties are perceivable items. Yet moreover, let us consider knowingly illusory experiences that are closer to seeing-in, namely experiences that involve a feeling of unreality that goes with perceiving real scenes. As Wittgenstein says in commenting such cases, in them "everything seems somehow not *real*; but not as if one *saw* things unclear or blurred; everything looks quite as usual" (1980: I§125). So, in one such case one's overall experience presents a real scene as if it also were unreal. Now, if this situation is true of complex experiences that are not twofold, a fortiori it may also hold true in the case of complex states that are twofold and can therefore distribute the relevant contradiction across their different folds, such as the seeing-in states. In a nutshell, one of the characterizing features of a seeing-in state involving a certain item is to let one see such an item in it as present *qua* absent, as some have said.²⁷⁰

Ultimately, the third approach seems to be the correct one: taken together, the two folds mobilize contents that are effectively in tension with each other, yet such a tension captures the specificity of the situation at stake with a pictorial experience. Yet once one accepts that this is how things must be, the comparison with the above 'feeling of unreality'- case may also reasonably tempt a defender of seeing-in to ascribe a

difference in mode to the two folds, as the fourth approach maintains. As we have seen, the recognitional fold knowingly illusorily gives a scene as being present because the configurational fold veridically gives another scene as being present. Because of such a situation, one may well say that, unlike the configurational fold, the recognitional fold is not accompanied by a *feeling* of presence affecting the items featuring the scene it gives. The two folds are therefore different: one is colored, the other is uncolored, by a feeling of presence. Thus, one may well say they also somehow differ in mode.

In more detailed terms, the configurational fold not only gives the picture's vehicle as being present, but it goes along with having a feeling of presentness as to such a vehicle. On the contrary, precisely because of the above situation concerning the configurational fold, although the recognitional fold still gives the item seen in the picture as being present, it does not come with having a feeling of presentness concerning such an item. That item is given as being present but it is not felt as such.

Although this complex situation affecting the recognitional fold sounds slightly paradoxical, it also happens in other cases. Consider hallucinations recognized as such. In such cases, the items featuring the contents of such states are still given as being present, yet they are no longer felt as such.

Let me just stress once again that in the seeing-in case, the recognitional fold is affected by no feeling of presence precisely because of the specific reason that makes that fold a known illusion; namely, the fact that it is flanked by the configurational fold. In a perceptual experience that is known to be illusory for other, admittedly non-visual, reasons, the item featuring the content of such an experience is not only given as present, but it is also felt as such. In the crooked oar illusion, for instance, I well know that the oar I experience is not crooked, yet not only I take it as being out there, I feel it as being out there.²⁷¹ Yet the recognitional fold displays a scene that, although it is (knowingly illusorily) seen as present, is felt as non-present precisely because what is seen to be present in the configurational fold, the picture's vehicle, is also felt as present. This may contribute to explain why, when two-dimensional pictures are involved, in our seeing-in state we are under the impression that the third dimension featuring the scene displayed by the recognitional fold is merely apparent.²⁷²

Thus, the two folds of a seeing-in state are not only such that their contents display a tension as to the presentness of the seen-in item of such a state. They also tend to be different in mode insofar as the configurational but not the recognitional fold is colored by a feeling of presence as to what the fold is about.²⁷³

4. *The Mode of Seeing-in*

All in all, the contents of the seeing-in folds can be integrated, if at least the content of the configurational fold is suitably enriched.²⁷⁴ Yet (at least *prima facie*²⁷⁵), one may still take these folds to be essentially the same kind of states. Granted, as we have seen, the configurational fold is colored by a feeling of presence while no such coloring accompanies the recognitional fold. Nevertheless, the first fold is a genuine successful perception of the picture's vehicle, while the second fold is a knowingly illusory seeing-as state concerning the items that constitute the picture's figurative content. As to their mode, therefore, both have a common factor – not only the second, but also the first fold is an as-of state of its respective content. Yet one may still wonder whether this version of the divisive approach to the seeing-in folds – different yet related contents, basically the same mode – faces no further problems. According to Hopkins, this is most likely the case. For, he says, such an approach is unable to account for *inflected* seeing-in, which is at least a variety of seeing-in.²⁷⁶

Intuitively speaking, inflection is the phenomenon according to which at least some of the seen features of the picture's vehicle are *somehow* relevant in characterizing features of the picture's scene seen *in* that vehicle. Yet, if we were merely to say that inflection points to the fact that certain seen properties of the picture's vehicle influence the properties with which that scene is seen in the picture, we would risk trivializing inflection as merely qualifying seeing-in *per se*.²⁷⁷ Thus, we must properly understand *how* the former properties are relevant. Now, in the relevant literature from Michael Podro (1998) onwards, different characterizations of inflection have been provided. To my mind, Hopkins himself provides the most convincing one. According to Hopkins, seeing-in is inflected iff the properties that items of the seen-in scene are seen as having

in the relevant picture are such that their characterization refers to the design properties, conceived as such, of the picture's vehicle.²⁷⁸ In Rembrandt's sketch of the pastor Jan Cornelisz Sylvius, the example Hopkins provides to illustrate such a definition, the pastor is seen to have a hand made of ink in the picture. Now, this characterization of the property in question, *being a hand made of ink*, which the seen-in item is seen as having in the sketch, refers to the fact that the property of *being an ink sketch* is responsible for the fact that a pastor with such a hand is seen in the sketch. In a nutshell, such a characterization refers to a certain design property conceived as such of the vehicle.²⁷⁹

Now, let us suppose that the recognitional fold has a perceptual character in the same general sense that the configurational fold does. When that fold grasps *inflected* properties, namely properties whose characterization refers to design properties (conceived as such) of the picture's vehicle, it grasps properties that "draw on different levels of reality, design, and scene" (Hopkins 2010a:175). Is this not a problem for the present defender of the divisive approach? How can one and the same fold grasp both the relevant design properties of the picture's vehicle and the relevant properties to be ascribed to the seen-in item?

To be sure, as Hopkins himself remarks,²⁸⁰ the present defender of the divisive approach may reply that the above combination of design and scene in just one fold is not particularly problematic insofar as it may also occur in other perceptual cases. For example, when we see something through distorted lenses, what we see is the result of both the perceived scene and the optical device by means of which such a scene is perceived. To be sure, Hopkins comments, in order to assess what we are seeing in the latter case we may either 'factor out' the device's intervention, in such a way that we *distortely* see a normal scene, or fail to 'factor out' such an intervention, so that we see a *distorted* scene. Yet, Hopkins remarks, if in the case of inflection we were to perform a similar assessment by still sticking to a divisive approach to seeing-in that appeals to the idea that the contents of the seeing-in folds are unproblematically incompatible (along with the idea that the general mode of such folds is the same), we would unfelicitously conflate inflected seeing-in with different cases of seeing-in.

To begin with, let us suppose that we were to adopt the ‘factored out’ treatment. In such a case, for instance, we take the hand seen in Rembrandt’s sketch as having a normal color for human skin that is simply drawn in ink. Yet if we do this, according to Hopkins, instead of having inflected seeing-in we have *nested* seeing-in.²⁸¹ Nested seeing-in prototypically takes place when we see a picture within a picture, in such a way that the item we see in the nesting picture is constituted *inter alia* by something – a nested picture – in which we see an additional thing. In Edgar Degas’ *Sulking*, we see a woman and man standing in front of a picture in which one can see additional items (namely, many racing horses). In nested seeing-in, what is seen in the design (of the nesting picture) needs characterizing by reference to a design (of the nested picture) still conceived as such.²⁸²



Figure 5.5 Edgar Degas, *Sulking*, ca. 1870; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York - H. O. Havemeyer Collection, Bequest of Mrs. H. O. Havemeyer, 1929

Let us suppose instead that we were to adopt the non- ‘factored out’ treatment. In such a case, for instance, we would take the seen-in cardinal’s hand of Rembrandt’s sketch as inky. Yet if we do this, according to Hopkins, instead of having inflected seeing-in we have *overlap*.²⁸³ Overlap is simply the case in which “the properties visible in a surface and the properties of its design match” (2010a:159), as when we see a black night in a picture painted mostly in black. Hopkins proceeds to conclude that, all in all, if we wish

to maintain a divisive approach to seeing-in that essentially appeals to the unproblematic incompatibility of the contents of the seeing-in folds, we must give up inflected seeing-in. Insofar as inflected seeing-in is a well-established phenomenon, this is not a satisfactory result.²⁸⁴

I agree with Hopkins that if we limit ourselves to treating inflected properties as strange properties of the seen-in items, as in the non- ‘factored out’ treatment, we lose inflection in favour of overlap (in the Rembrandt example, both the relevant part of the sketch and the seen-in cardinal’s hand merely turn out to be inky). Yet I wonder whether the ‘factored out’ treatment of inflection really equates inflected seeing-in with nested seeing-in. For *pace* Hopkins,²⁸⁵ if ‘factoring out’ has to be understood along the way it works with lenses and what they let one see, nested seeing-in does not ‘factor out’ design. Thus, inflected seeing-in and nested seeing-in remain different phenomena even for the present defender of the divisive approach to seeing-in. Let me explain.

In inflected seeing-in, ‘factoring out’ design means to separate what is given in the recognitional fold of the relevant seeing-in state from a *modality* – design itself – according to which something is given in that fold. In order to see how this separation may work, let us consider a suggestion made by Wollheim himself.²⁸⁶ According to Wollheim, as far as a picture in general is concerned we can distinguish three kinds of ‘how’ it is a pictorial representation, to be distinguished by the ‘what’ of such a representation, i.e., its figurative content: the *Representational* how, the *Presentational* how, and the *Material* how. First, the Material how is simply what grounds the other two hows. We may conceive it as a mixture of the properties which are captured in the configurational fold of a seeing-in state: the merely visible surface properties and the design properties. Second, the Representational how instead corresponds to the properties with which an item is seen in a picture; in so determining the picture’s figurative content, it therefore determines the content of a seeing-in’s recognitional fold. Finally, the Presentational how “does not qualify the what at all” (2003b:143); that is, it does not contribute to the above content but to how that content is given. We may understand it as a selection of the design properties that figure in the Material How, namely, those design properties featuring how we capture, in the recognitional fold, the

properties that constitute the content of that fold. As such, the Presentational how involves design features that no longer affect the recognitional fold. Now, among the features that qualify such a how, there are the design features responsible for inflection that in a ‘factored out’ treatment of inflection must be removed from the content of a seeing-in’s recognitional fold. “When Matisse painted a stroke of green down his wife’s face, he was not representing a woman who had a green line down her face.” (*ib.*)

Yet in nested seeing-in, we cannot separate in this way design from what is given in the recognitional fold of the seeing-in state that concerns the nesting picture. For such a design cannot be ruled out of the content of this fold. What that fold gives us is a non-present nesting scene containing *an item with a certain figurative value*, hence an item along with at least some properties, i.e., *its own* design properties, which are responsible for the fact that an *additional* item is seen in that very item. The additional item constitutes a nested scene, which for us is doubly non-present. This would be the merely non-present scene that spectators of the nested picture would grasp in the recognitional fold of *their* seeing-in states (for such spectators, that scene would be the only non-present scene they would grasp). Definitely, these spectators might ‘factor out’ the design of the first item, so as to remove it from the content – the nested scene – of the recognitional fold of their seeing-in states. For such a design would be grasped in the configurational fold of such states. Yet *we* cannot ‘factor out’ *that* design. For if we did this, we would grasp what is (for us) the doubly non-present (nested) scene as a mere part of the (for us) non-present (nesting) scene. In the *Sulking* case, while facing the painting we would see two humans in it with horses racing just behind them. Yet this means that we would lose nested seeing-in, the fact that what we see in the nesting picture is a scene that nests another scene. Unnesting happens if a picture embeds a *trompe-l’oeil* that is not recognized as such, in such a way that the nested scene it displays appears as continuing the nesting scene.

A typical example of this is illustrated by René Magritte’s *The Human Condition*. Instead of taking the whole picture as a nesting picture presenting an easel from which a nested picture that is hung on it, first, mainly occludes a landscape we see through the aperture presented in the nesting picture, and second, instead presents a

(nested) indistinguishable landscape, we mistake the whole picture as simply presenting an aperture displaying an overall landscape.

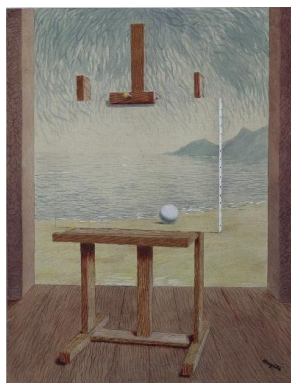


Figure 5.6 René Magritte, *The Human Condition*, 1945; The Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, Ohio, USA - ARTstor Collection, The Cleveland Museum of Art Collection Formerly in The AMICO Library

An alternative way of seeing this point involves having both inflected seeing-in and nested seeing-in as independently regarding *one and the same picture*. Let us suppose I were to draw a sketch of someone holding a picture of a human being in his hands, and that I were to also draw the relevant part of the sketch corresponding to that nested picture in such a powerful way that in the whole sketch that picture is seen to be made of ink. Vincent Van Gogh's *Bedroom in Arles* can be taken to be an example of such a situation; let us consider the nested picture closest to the door on the right-hand side of the painting.²⁸⁷



Figure 5.7 Vincent van Gogh, *Bedroom at Arles*, 1889; Art Institute of Chicago - ARTstor Collection, Art History Survey Collection

Now, I can easily ‘factor out’ the fact that the nested picture is seen to be made of ink in the sketch in terms of *how* I grasp (in the recognitional fold of my seeing-in state) what is presented by the relevant part of the sketch, so as to take what I see in that part of the nesting picture as a normally colored nested picture. Yet this nested picture is still an item with a certain figurative value insofar as (to put it briefly) if I were a spectator of it, I would see a human being in it. Thus, in such a case ‘factoring out’ the design affecting inflected seeing-in leaves nested seeing-in completely untouched. For on the one hand the design that affects inflected seeing-in may be taken as regarding the modality by means of which an item is seen in the nesting picture. On the other hand, as to nested seeing-in the design qualifying that very item, thereby yielding figurative value for it, inexorably contributes to constitute the content of what is seen in such a picture (properly speaking, in the recognitional fold of the seeing-in state concerning that nesting picture).

All in all, therefore, it seems that we can take both the configurational and the recognitional fold of a seeing-in state as being perceptual in character and still have inflected seeing-in. Thus, we can stick to a divisive approach towards seeing-in, provided that it ascribes to the configurational fold of a certain seeing-in state a suitably enriched content that explains why the recognitional fold of that state has the unproblematically incompatible content it has.

Nevertheless, by saying all this I have not yet guaranteed that seeing-in is the mark of figurativity. Upholding that the content of the configurational fold of a seeing-in state must be suitably enriched entails that ordinary design properties, which are the design properties primarily grasped in the configurational fold over and above merely visible surface properties, are not sufficient for figurativity. As we have seen earlier, perceptually ambiguous pictures clearly show this point. If we were to limit ourselves to grasping, in the configurational fold, both the colors and the forms of the vehicle of a perceptually ambiguous picture, we would not understand why the picture has different

figurative values, depending on the various ways we can see it. I must, therefore, specify *how* the content of a configurational fold of a seeing-in state must be suitably enriched, or in other terms, *which* further design properties must be grasped in such a content, in order for a seeing-in state to be the mark of figurativity. Unless I am more explicit with regards to this matter, the issue of whether seeing-in is not only necessary but also sufficient for figurativity cannot be solved. This is the objective of the next chapter, in which I will – at last! – introduce my syncretistic theory of depiction.

Part Two

The Syncretistic Theory

Chapter VI

The Syncretistic Theory: A General Survey

1. Grouping Properties

Our survey of all former theories of depiction has finally come to an end. It is now time to collect all of the positive results I have gathered along the way from such theories and to articulate them within a new theory, i.e., the syncretistic theory of depiction.

To begin with, the syncretist clearly accepts the Wollheimian claim that seeing-in is a necessary condition of depiction. Typically, seeing-in is a *sui generis* experience endowed with its own phenomenal character, as Wollheim maintained. Yet the syncretist does not rule out that, insofar as there are unconscious pictures, there is also unconscious seeing-in. Indeed, the behavior of individuals who unconsciously face pictures seems to show that such individuals unconsciously take such pictures neither as mere blobs of colors and forms nor as things they mistakenly perceive as other things, but precisely as items endowed with a figurative value. If this is correct, it shows that what constitutively characterizes seeing-in is not its phenomenal character – for such a character may be lacking – but its specific kind of content along with its *sui generis* perceptual mode. Therefore, from this point forward, in order to take into account the possibility of unconscious seeing-in I will continue to use the way of speaking of seeing-in that I adopted in the previous chapter, according to which seeing-in basically is a mental *state*, even if it is often an *experience*.

In the previous chapter, I already stated what the perceptual mode of seeing-in basically consists in: it is the outcome of the genuine veridical perception of the picture's vehicle along with the knowingly illusory perception of such a vehicle as a certain scene that is seen, but not felt, as present. We will later see how this statement has to be precisified. Yet for the time being I wish to simply focus on the specific

content of seeing-in. As I already outlined in the previous chapter, this content is the outcome of the contents of the two folds that constitute seeing-in: the configurational fold and the recognitional fold. For the syncretist, Wollheim is right in holding that such folds have a psychological reality, as we have seen in the previous chapter. Yet in order to also claim, first, that such folds are inseparable, and second, that the latter depends on the former, the syncretist must first of all show how the contents of such folds are integrated. In the previous chapter, we saw that, in order to achieve this integration, the configurational fold must have an enriched content. That is to say, in its being the perception of the picture's vehicle, this fold must grasp not only the merely visible surface properties of this vehicle along with its ordinary design properties – typically, its colors and forms – but also certain other design properties. Put alternatively, the mere perception of the picture's vehicle changes its perceptual phenomenal character once it is embedded in a seeing-in state as its configurational fold. For, as 'aspect-dawning'- pictures clearly show, the above perception grasps further design properties of the vehicle over and above its colors and forms.²⁸⁸ It is now time to see in detail what these additional design properties are.

In chap. IV, I said that 'aspect dawning'- pictures are the pictures *par excellence*. For, in displaying how an 'aspect dawning'- picture reveals its pictorial character, namely its being a figurative image, the 'dawning' of an aspect more generally shows how pictures can be items endowed with a figurative value. Now, how can an aspect 'dawn' upon us? By means of the fact that, over and above grasping the colors and forms of the picture's vehicle, we precisely come to grasp another one of its features, i.e., a particular way for its elements to be assembled. In the aforementioned case of the picture of horses, the 'horses'- aspect 'dawns' upon us once we assemble some of its vehicle's black and white patches by circumscribing them within certain contours that contribute to such an assemblage. This operation allows new items to stand out from what immediately turns out to be their background – what we suddenly recognize as horses set against a background (actually, within the context of a knowingly illusory recognition, which we will get to later).

In accordance with a pre-existing usage, I shall give the name *grouping properties* to the properties of being arranged in certain ways that the pictorial vehicle's elements possess. These are the properties that were originally labelled *Gestalt qualities* by their discoverer in the tradition of Gestalt psychology, the Austrian psychologist Christian von Ehrenfels (1988).²⁸⁹ Grouping properties are at work in mere two-dimensional items, as when e.g. one groups elements according to either their height or their length, as well as in three-dimensional items (not only items that purportedly have a figurative value, like statues, puppets and manikins, but also ordinary three-dimensional individuals), and also in two-dimensional items that are seen three-dimensionally, as when one also groups elements according to depth: the standard two-dimensional cases of figurative images.

Let me begin by showing how such groupings may occur both in mere two-dimensional cases and in cases that prompt a two-dimensional item to have a figurative value. Situations can indeed be pointed out in which we can group a two-dimensional item's elements both merely two-dimensionally and also three-dimensionally. Let us consider the famous Kanizsa triangle. We may see that figure as a mere two-dimensional white triangle whose vertexes are wedged into three concave mere two-dimensional black figures and whose contours are partially shared by three further triangles delimited by black wedge-like lines. Yet we may also see that figure in such a way that in it we see a three-dimensional triangular body set in front of both a further three-dimensional triangular body and three three-dimensional spherical bodies that the previous triangular body partially occludes.

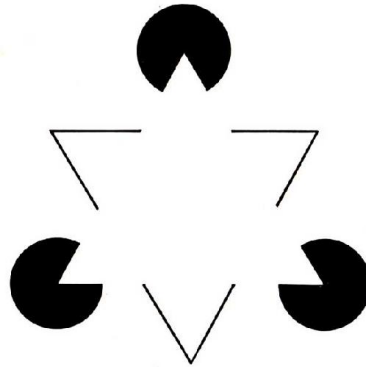


Figure 6.1 Kanizsa's triangle

Once again, moreover, perceptually ambiguous items may allow us to easily understand how such properties work. In the case of a mere two-dimensional perceptually ambiguous item, we simply group that item's elements in different 2-D ways, e.g. when we see the following mere two-dimensional item either as a distorted square or as a 'kitish'- figure.

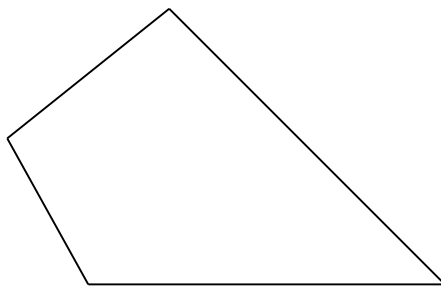


Figure 6.2 square-kite

In the case of perceptually ambiguous two-dimensional items that are seen three-dimensionally, by grouping one such item's elements in different three-dimensional ways, we instead let that item have a multiple figurative value. For according to its

different groupings, that item lets us alternatively see different additional items in it. Typically, when one such two-dimensional array that is seen three-dimensionally is at stake, we have a perceptually ambiguous picture at our disposal. Let us consider e.g. the Rubin vase, in which as we have seen in the previous chapter we either see two black faces standing out from a white background or one white vase standing out from a black background. In some if not most cases, one and the same two-dimensional item can receive different perceptual readings that are 2-D and 3-D, respectively. Paradigmatically, this is the case with the ‘double cross’- figure. We can see it either as a two-dimensional black cross that is more salient than a two-dimensional white cross or *vice versa*. Yet we can also see it as a perceptually ambiguous picture, for in it we can see either a three-dimensional white cross set in front of a black background or a three-dimensional black cross set in front of a white background.²⁹⁰

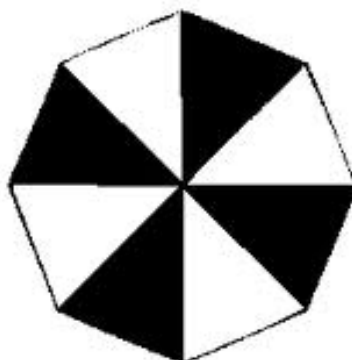


Figure 6.3 double cross

As I have said, groupings may also occur with regards to genuinely three-dimensional items. This happens not only with ordinary three-dimensional objects but also with three-dimensional items that, at least *prima facie*, are endowed with a figurative value. In such cases, perceptual ambiguities that involve different groupings may affect these items, as well. Let us consider for instance the Rubin vase again. Over and above the classic two-dimensional picture that, depending on the different groupings, can be seen in two ways such that either two black faces standing out from a white background or one white vase standing out from a black background can be seen in it, there can also be

a three-dimensional item that presents the very same ambiguity as far as its figurative value is concerned.²⁹¹



Figure 6.4 Luca Maria Patella, *Vasa physiognomica* (personal photo)

Now, at least in the cases of two-dimensional items that are seen three-dimensionally, the relevant grouping properties are precisely the design properties I was looking for in order to suitably enrich the content of the configurational fold of a mental state of seeing-in. In the case of a perceptually ambiguous picture, indeed, the perception of its vehicle splits in two different configurational folds. For these folds have different enriched contents that, over and above sharing certain traditional design properties – typically, the vehicle’s colors and forms – respectively mobilize different additional design properties for that vehicle, i.e., different grouping properties, those that respectively enable one to see different items in the picture. Yet a similar situation occurs in the case of a standard perceptually non-ambiguous picture. In this case, too, although the configurational fold of the relevant seeing-in state has a perceptual nature, it is not identical with the perception of the picture’s vehicle we could have if we were to perceive that vehicle in isolation. In order for us to see this difference, let us consider precisely what happens with the perception of an ‘aspect dawning’- picture once we grasp its figurative value. Before such a grasping, this perception instead grasps only the ordinary design properties of the picture’s vehicle (over and above its merely visible surface ones): typically, its colors and forms. Once we grasp such a value, the content of this perception is suitably enriched. In other terms, that perception becomes the

configurational fold of a twofold mental state of seeing-in once it also grasps additional design properties of such a vehicle, namely, its grouping properties.

As I hinted at in chap. V, grouping properties – what I there limited myself to considering as contour properties – are genuine design properties. For, like any other such property, they are responsible for the fact that a certain item is seen in the picture’s vehicle. Yet unlike ordinary design properties, they are also responsible for the fact that such an item emerges in the picture, as ‘aspect dawning’- pictures vividly show. As I said there, we do not first see an item in a vehicle and then grasp such properties. Rather, it is the other way around: it is because we grasp such properties that we see such an item in the vehicle. Robert Hopkins remarks that design-seeing can be either revelatory – it allows one to see a scene that was already there – or generative – it creates the scene it allows one to see. He also finds that the second alternative is more plausible, at least if a seeing-in proponent wishes to explain in ‘divisive’ terms (i.e., by appealing to the seeing-in folds as having psychological reality) how, when facing the picture’s vehicle, one can grasp both the marks drawn on it and three-dimensional items at one and the same time.²⁹² Yet in order for design-seeing to play such a generative role, it must precisely grasp properties that are responsible not only for the fact that one sees such a non-actual (or better yet, non-present; let me once again stick to this latter feature) scene in the relevant vehicle but also for the fact that such a scene *emerges* from that vehicle for its spectator. Such properties are precisely the vehicle’s grouping properties. As I hinted at in the previous chapter, *qua* design properties, grouping properties may play both the ‘responsibility’- and the ‘emergence’- role.

This relationship between the emergence of figurativity and the mobilization of grouping properties is patent in many other pictorial cases, especially those that lie so to speak on one border of the pictorial range, where figurativity arises. Let us begin by considering stick figures or even nominal silhouettes, including pattern poems. By means of a few marks, stick figures are able to let us see certain items in them. Analogously, nominal silhouettes, such as the “Alfred Hitchcock”- pattern considered in chap. II, are verbal signs transformed into entities endowed with a figurative value by suitably relocating elements that constitute them. Now, in their primitivity stick figures,

nominal silhouettes and the like show what also happens in more complicated cases. Needless to say, *La Gioconda* is incredibly more complex, let alone more beautiful, than a stick figure in which one sees, say, a human face. Yet what lets *La Gioconda* enable one to see a human face, among other things, in it as well (though of course a more finely detailed one), is precisely the same mechanism that is at work in such a figure. As stick figures and the like make evident, in this respect grouping properties wear the trousers. For such figures allow us to see something in them only insofar as their relevant grouping properties are mobilized. Let us reconsider the very basic stick figure we saw in the previous chapter as Figure 5.4. In such a case, we horizontally group the two traits at the top of the figure, by simultaneously grouping such traits vertically along with the further trait that constitutes the figure, as well as grouping all such traits within an additional circular trait that excludes those traits from the surrounding background. In virtue of all such operations, we manage to see a (human) face in the figure.

As I just said above, perceptually ambiguous pictures constitute other cases in point. For we can see different things in one such picture as soon as we differently group the very same elements that constitute the vehicle of such a picture. In the ‘duck-rabbit’- case, once we group the vehicle’s elements in a certain direction, we see a duck in it, while once we group the very same elements in another direction, we see a rabbit in it. Once again, the ‘duck-rabbit’- picture mobilizes a primitive mechanism. Yet the very same mechanism that lets that picture have a different figurativity is at work in more complicated pictures, such as the Giuseppe Arcimboldo’s paintings in which one respectively sees either a human face or a group of fruits and vegetables.

Insofar as grouping properties are ranked among design properties, such properties turn out to be properties of the *picture’s vehicle*, hence they are *objective* properties, i.e., properties of the things perceived, not of our perceptions of them. Perceptually ambiguous pictures, however, may lead us to question whether this is really the case. If such properties were properties of the picture’s vehicle, it would turn out that in a perceptually ambiguous picture one such property would be instantiated *whenever* another such property is instantiated. But how can this be? First, in general, if

different mental states concerning the same thing are ascribed different contents, then what is seen in such states respectively has the properties determining such contents in different possible worlds, not in the same ones, as it should be if such properties are necessarily co-instantiated.²⁹³ Second, how could such properties be had in the same possible worlds by what is seen in a mental state, if the ways in which a perceptually ambiguous picture can be seen are clearly incompatible? Let us consider e.g. the famous picture in which one can see either a young lady or an old woman. Clearly enough, in order for something that is seen either as a young lady or as an old woman to be (at the same time) a young lady and an old woman, it must be such in different possible worlds; it cannot be both things (at the same time) in the same possible world.



Figure 6.5 young lady – old woman

The answer to the first question is obvious.²⁹⁴ The above condition appealing to a worldly difference for content difference between mental states only gives a sufficient, but not necessary, condition for such a difference. So, the different configurational folds of the seeing-in states grasping the vehicle of a perceptually ambiguous picture may still have different contents, even if they mobilize properties that can indeed be had by such a vehicle in the same possible world. For one may well say that contents satisfied in the same possible worlds are still different, insofar as they mobilize properties that are more fine-grained than intensions, i.e., functions from possible worlds to extensions. This also generally holds true for different kinds of properties. Although the set of equilateral triangles is identical with the set of equiangular triangles in all possible worlds, the

property of *being an equilateral triangle* is different from the property of *being an equiangular triangle*. *Mutatis mutandis*, the same obtains here: although, for instance, the set of the ‘youngladyly arranged’ vehicles strongly coincides with the set of the ‘oldwomanly arranged’ vehicles in the sense that whenever the property of *being a youngladyly arranged vehicle* is instantiated so is the property of *being an oldwomanly arranged vehicle*, and *vice versa*, the two properties are still different. There is a very important difference, however, between the pair of necessarily co-instantiated properties of *being an equilateral triangle* and *being an equiangular triangle* and the pair of properties of *being a youngladyly arranged vehicle* and *being an oldwomanly arranged vehicle*, or any other pair of necessarily co-instantiated grouping properties for that matter. Unlike the first pair, no experience mobilizes both such grouping properties at one and the same time, although the relevant vehicle possesses both such ways for its elements to be arranged. This is why grouping properties may account for the phenomenological switch one entertains when differently grasping a perceptually ambiguous picture.²⁹⁵

Once we answer the first question in this way, moreover, the second question is clearly answered, as well. To stick to the above example, if the ways in which the ‘young lady / old woman’- picture can be seen mobilized the properties of *being a young lady at t* and *being an old woman at t* respectively, they would be clearly incompatible. Yet first of all, they directly affect the contents of the different configurational folds in which one such picture is primarily grasped. The contents of the recognitional folds in which such a picture is also grasped, which indisputably mobilize somehow the above properties, shall be left out of consideration for the moment. Moreover, insofar as the above is the case, such ways do not mobilize the aforementioned properties, but rather the properties of *being a youngladywise arranged vehicle* and *being an oldwomanwise arranged vehicle*. Since such properties are necessarily co-instantiated – whenever something is a ‘youngladywise arranged’ vehicle, it is also an ‘oldwomanwise arranged’ vehicle, and *vice versa* – these ways are clearly compatible.

Yet at this point another question of the same general kind may arise. As we already saw, in a perceptually ambiguous picture its colors and forms remain the same. Yet, depending on how we arrange such forms, different items are seen in it. Does this not show that grouping properties are not properties of the vehicle but rather properties of the mental state, or more precisely of the fold of such a state – the configurational fold in such a case – by means of which we perceive such a vehicle? In a nutshell, are grouping properties not *subjective* rather than objective properties?²⁹⁶

However, this question can be answered negatively. If grouping properties were properties of the mental state rather than of the entities grasped in such a state, we might first of all expect that if our state changed, such properties would change accordingly. But this is not the case. Let us suppose, for instance, that we perceive the very basic stick figure I shown earlier by facing it not frontally but laterally, or by approaching it rather than by distancing ourselves from it. Definitely, our overall mental state changes. Yet in the figure we are facing we still grasp the same face by identically grouping its elements. As one may say, whenever we face a two-dimensional thing endowed with a figurative value, we grasp the same item in it by means of the same grouping operation irrespectively of the perspective from which we see that thing. *Mutatis mutandis*, the same applies to a perceptually ambiguous picture. Its ambiguous figurativity cannot be traced back to the perspective we adopt with respect to the picture. For it emerges from different such perspectives, in connection with the different organizational operations of the pictorial vehicle's elements we perform from any such perspective.²⁹⁷

In this respect, we must not be led astray by the fact that we can grasp a picture's figurativity only from certain perspectives. Let us consider the famous Nazca lines drawn on Peruvian soil, whose figurative value can be appreciated only when appropriately seen from above, not when seen from below by walking around them. Yet this fact merely shows that, as with any picture, there must be a vantage point from which to observe it. Once that point is reached, we can freely move around the picture and still grasp the same figurative value in it by performing the same grouping operation.

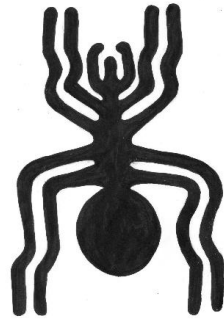


Figure 6.6 A Nazca line (by courtesy of Paola Tosti)

Incidentally, the phenomenon of anamorphosis can be precisely accounted for in these terms. Hans Holbein's *The Ambassadors* presents a famous case of anamorphosis. If we look at it while standing in front of it, we hardly discern the skull which it also depicts. It would seem as though the picture depicts an oddly shaped object, a sort of a long egglike object, provided that it depicts anything at all there. In order to discern the skull in it, we must occupy a specific vantage point, namely, a very oblique position. For this point enables us to perform the proper grouping operation on the picture's vehicle that can then be performed while entertaining other perspectives with respect to that vehicle.²⁹⁸



Figure 6.7 Hans Holbein, *The Ambassadors*, 1533; The National Gallery, London - ARTstor Collection, The National Gallery, London

Figure 6.8 Hans Holbein, *The Ambassadors* (particular)

Conversely, moreover, if grouping properties were subjective properties we might expect that even if the pictorial vehicle's elements were to change as a whole, we could still perform the very same grouping operation with such a vehicle. But this is not the case. If, for instance, we were to add additional elements to a picture's vehicle, we would no longer be able to group its extant elements as before. Let us take, for example, the marks whose arrangement lets us see a parallelepiped in them and suppose we were to put them into other marks. Although the original marks are still in the new collection of marks, such an arrangement is no longer practicable.²⁹⁹

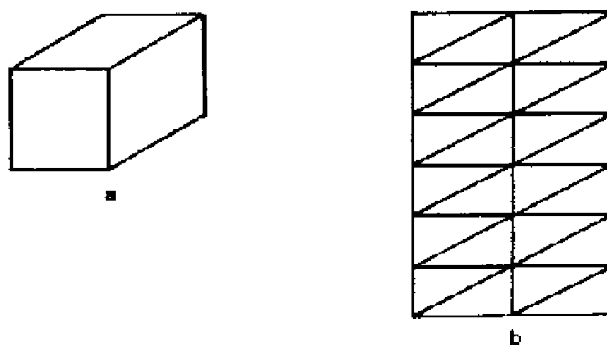


Figure 6.9 a visible and an invisible parallelepiped

To be sure, one might try to reformulate the 'subjectivity'-objection as concerning the groupings that involve the third dimension. These groupings are very relevant for my purposes since, as I will point out later, they are determinant in order to let a scene perceptually emerge from a picture's vehicle. Yet one might say that, since the picture's vehicle is two-dimensional (putting sculptures and the like aside for the time being), any grouping of the vehicle's elements that involves depth is utterly subjective. Cases of perceptually ambiguous pictures should make this point evident. Let us consider the Rubin vase once again. Is it not clear that, since the black and white patches that constitute the picture's vehicle only occupy the first and the second dimension, there is no fact of the matter as to which patch is in front of or behind another patch, witness the fact that we can see the white patch in front of the black patches as well as the other way around?

To be sure, in grouping the elements of a *two-dimensional* vehicle along *depth*, we are projecting on the vehicle a dimension that, unlike length and height, the vehicle itself does not include; in the vehicle, depth is more apparent than real. Yet, when putting forward this limited version of the objection, we are obviously mistaken in equating grouping properties with physically available shapes of the picture's vehicle. This is not even the case with groupings taking place in the first and in the second dimension. To stick to perceptually ambiguous pictures, let us consider the 'duck-rabbit'- picture once again. Here, the perceptually relevant switch occurs in the first two dimensions and concerns organizations of the pictorial vehicle's elements that go beyond the shapes physically available in such a vehicle. Even though there is simply a closed line drawn on that vehicle, we can group the elements it circumscribes either one way or another so as to obtain two different two-dimensional silhouettes, just as in the case of the 'square-kite'- figure, which we arrange either as a two-dimensional distorted square or as a two-dimensional kite. That is to say, neither the 'duck-like' two-dimensional silhouette nor the 'rabbit-like' two-dimensional silhouette have a physical reality. Now, once we group the vehicle's elements of the 'duck-rabbit'- picture also along the third dimension, we simply get two three-dimensional organizations – the 'duckish' three-dimensional organization, by means of which in the picture's vehicle we see a duck standing in front of a background, and the 'rabbitish' three-dimensional organization, by means of which in that vehicle we see a rabbit standing in front of a background – that do not physically exist either. All in all, therefore, if we have admitted that two-dimensional organizations have an objective even if not physical reality, then we must admit the same when three-dimensional organizations are at stake.

Yet clearly, to say that grouping properties are not properties of the mental state of seeing-in but rather properties of the thing grasped in the configurational fold of such a state, i.e., of the picture's vehicle, is not the end of the matter. For, insofar as grouping properties are objective but have no physical reality, we must still understand what kind of objective properties they are.

To begin with, it seems clear that grouping properties are *orientation-dependent* properties. Let us again consider perceptually ambiguous pictures, which allow us to see

this point very easily. If we look at the ‘duck-rabbit’- picture and fix our gaze on the isolated dot towards the right of the picture by looking at the elements to the left of this point, we see the picture in a ‘duckish’ way. Yet, if we look at the picture by fixing our gaze on the two linear curves to the left, then by looking at the elements to the right of these curves, we see the picture in a ‘rabbitish’ way. Thus, different ways of orienting one’s look towards a perceptually ambiguous picture enable one to perform the different groupings of the picture’s elements, which in such a case supply the picture with different figurative values.

At this point, it may seem natural to say that the orientation under which a certain grouping of a picture’s elements occurs is an orientation in an *egological* space, as the recourse to egological orientation points (left-right, but also top-down/bottom-up, and front-back) seems to show. If this were the case, however, grouping properties would be *strongly mind-dependent* properties, i.e., properties that depend on a subjective point of view, on view-centered frames.³⁰⁰ The risk that their character is subjective rather than objective would rightly arise again. For such a dependence on a subjective point of view makes the mind of whomever grasps strongly-mind dependent properties relevant for their *individuation*: if those properties were not so dependent, they would be different properties.

Yet this way of putting things is not correct. The egological description notwithstanding, orientation-dependence occurs in a *geometrical*, not an egological, space. In order to grasp this difference, suppose for instance that we were to draw a perceptually ambiguous merely two-dimensional item such as the ‘square-kite’- figure on a transparent vehicle such as a window pane and that we were to see it from both sides, i.e., both from the front and from the back. Now, if the different ways of seeing the figure, the ‘kitish’ one and the ‘squarish’ one, were to occur by essentially grouping its lines either in an upleft-to-downright sense or in a downleft-to-upright sense when seeing the figure frontally, we would have to conclude that when seeing the figure from the other side, different additional ways would emerge by then grouping the figure’s lines in an upright-to-downleft sense and in a downright-to-upleft sense. Yet in point of fact from both sides there are simply *two ways* of grouping the figure, directionally

arranged along a cardinal frame of reference (say, a northeast-to-southwest way and a northwest-to-southeast way) rather than an egological frame of reference. Therefore, different perspectival characterizations are simply different approximate descriptions of one and the same cardinal way of grouping the figure. Therefore, despite different four perspectives, there are just two ways of grouping the figure prompting exactly two corresponding seeing-as experiences.

Mutatis mutandis, the same happens with perceptually ambiguous pictures. Let us consider the following picture, which one can see either as a picture of Lenin or as a picture of Che Guevara.



Figure 6.10 Che-Lenin (by courtesy of Paola Tosti)

A perspectivalist may say that in order to see Lenin in it, one has to group the picture's elements in a top-down sense, while in order to see Che, one has to group the picture's elements in a bottom-up sense. Yet the perspectivalist would also have to say that if one saw the picture from the top of it, then in order to see Lenin in it, one would have to group the picture's elements in a bottom-up sense, while in order to see Che, one would have to group the picture's elements in a top-down sense. In this case, things would indeed be seen this way:



Figure 6.11 Che-Lenin, seen from the top (by courtesy of Paola Tosti)

Yet, if it were taken literally, this perspectivalist description of the orientations relevant for groupings would be incorrect. For in point of fact there are just two relevant orientations, the cardinal orientations. Notwithstanding one's position with respect to the picture, once one grasps its elements from north to south one sees Lenin in it, while once one grasps its elements from south to north one sees Che in it.

Thus, the orientation-dependence that is relevant for grouping a picture's elements occurs in a *geometrical*, not in an *egological* space. As a further result, grouping properties are just *weakly mind-dependent* properties. For they depend not on a subjective, but on an objective point of view: a 'polar' point of view.³⁰¹ Indeed, the orientation point of view on which such properties depend provides an ordering not in an egological space, but in the physical publicly shared space. As such, weak mind-dependence is just *existential* dependence: admittedly, grouping properties would not exist if there were no such orientation point, or no ordering yielding a certain arrangement of the figure's elements.

A clarification must be made at this point. The perceptually ambiguous two-dimensional 'Che-Lenin'- picture that I have just called on displays its ambiguity in the first two-dimensions, just as the 'duck-rabbit'- picture. Yet other perceptually ambiguous two-dimensional pictures display their ambiguity in the third dimension, as is e.g. the case with the Rubin vase. In such a case, the alternative groupings depend on the pictorial vehicle's elements being ordered differently along the same objective direction in the third dimension, i.e., a direction that goes from one ideal end of that

dimension to its other ideal end — we might call these ends ‘poles’ in an attempt to adhere to the analogy with the other two dimensions. In the Rubin vase, for instance, we either group certain elements of the pictorial vehicle closer to one end of the third dimension — as if they were *protruding* to it — and other elements farther from that end, or we group them the other way around — what was closer to a certain end ends up being farther from that end — as if it were *receding* from it — while the other elements end up being closer to it.

So far, so good. One may well remark that, by saying that in entertaining a state of seeing-in we provide something with a figurative value (or equivalently, if that something is a representation, we provide it with a pictorial character) by perceiving grouping properties in it, the syncretistic theory accepts the perceptualist tenet that a world without perceivers is a pictureless world.

At this point, however, we might still be wondering whether grouping properties really need such a mind-dependent character, even if it is a weakly mind-dependent one. Could not the orientation be an *object-centered* orientation rather than an objective viewpoint-centered orientation? One may rather claim that grouping properties involve object-centered frames coinciding with some intrinsic axes of the picture’s vehicle.³⁰² Yet I believe that object-reference frames must give way to external frames such as those previously illustrated, the ‘polar’ frames.

On behalf of the proponent of object-centered frames, one may put forward the following remark. Let us consider the two merely two-dimensional figures below. The figure on the right-hand side, the so-called Mach figure, is such that we can see it either as a diamond or as a tilted square. The figure on the left-hand side is a normal square, yet we may analogously say, quite legitimately, that we can see it either as a square (as we normally do) or even as a tilted diamond.

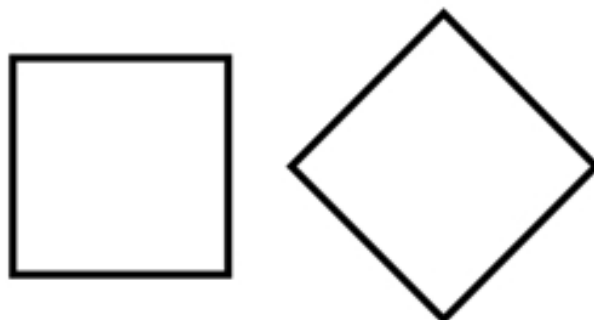


Figure 6.12 a square and the Mach figure

Now, says the proponent of object-centered frames, the different groupings that are involved in the respective figures cannot be accounted for in terms of their depending on an orientation based on geometrical viewpoints, such as cardinal points. Clearly, in order to provide the relevant readings the elements of the two figures must be respectively grouped in different ways. Yet we cannot appeal to cardinal orientations in order to account for such groupings. For the *very same* cardinal orientation – say, a north-to-south orientation – would turn out to be mobilized in *different* seeing-as experiences of the two figures respectively: say, a ‘diamondish’ experience in the case of the Mach figure and a ‘suarish’ experience in the case of a normal square. Therefore, according to this remark, external frames of reference cannot account for the difference in phenomenal character among seeing-as experiences.³⁰³

True enough, in such a situation one and the same cardinal order corresponds to, say, both the ‘diamondish’ experience of the Mach figure and the ‘suarish’ experience of the normal square. Yet one must recall that grouping operations always occur *after* we have grasped the more basic perceptual features of a figure to which such operations apply. These are the features of a figure that remain constant in a seeing-as switch that concerns it: namely, its colors and forms. In our case, however, there is a difference in the more basic perceptual features of the two figures involved. This difference brings about that there is a phenomenological difference in the experiences of such figures that precedes their also being grouped in certain ways. Indeed, this phenomenological difference depends on the fact that before being somehow grouped, the Mach figure and

the normal square are differently shaped, so as to differently parse the respective region of the physical space they occupy. In other terms, what makes these figures phenomenologically different are their respective features that remain perceptually constant in the respective phenomenal switches that concern them, namely their different shapes. Because of this prior phenomenal difference between the two figures, the following situation arises. On the one hand, what accounts for the seeing-as differences that affect the Mach figure may still be, respectively, a *certain* cardinal orientation (north-to-south, say) of its shapes, prompting a ‘diamondish’ seeing-as experience of it, and *another* cardinal orientation of its shapes (northwest-to-southeast, say), prompting a ‘suarish’ experience of it. On the other hand, what accounts for the seeing-as differences that affect the second figure, the normal square, may still be the *first* cardinal orientation of its shapes, north-to-south, yet this time prompting a ‘suarish’ seeing-as experience of it, and the *second* cardinal orientation of its shapes, northwest-to-southeast, yet this time prompting a ‘diamondish’ seeing-as experience of it. Or so I claim.

Moreover, we may further wonder whether this ‘polar’ orientation dependence is mental in any plausible sense of the term. If the elements in a picture’s vehicle are arranged according to a ‘polar’ ordering, in what sense is a *mind* needed in order to perform such an organization?

In order to answer this question, let me start from the fact that in the debate about grouping properties, most people agree on that *attention* is required in order to perform the grouping operation. As I said before, in the case of the ‘duck-rabbit’-picture, for instance, once we *fix* our gaze on the isolated dot towards the right of the figure, then by looking at the picture’s elements standing on one side of the dot, we see the picture in a ‘duckish’ way. Yet, if we look at the figure by *fixing* our gaze on the two linear curves on the opposite side of such a figure, then by looking at the figure’s elements on the other side of the figure, we see the figure in a ‘rabbitish’ way.³⁰⁴ Thus, attention is definitely involved in order for the configurational fold of a seeing-in state to have a suitably enriched content so as to include grouping properties of the picture’s vehicle we face.³⁰⁵

Yet many people conceive the role of attention in selecting grouping properties as if it were a mere ‘passive’ role of focalizing points of the vehicle one is facing in order to enable the perceptual mechanism to grasp what is already there, a certain organization in this case.³⁰⁶ As if attention were a mere spotlight that helps the perceptual mechanism grasp what is already there by merely illuminating it.

Yet this cannot be the way attention works in such a case. For if it worked this way, it could not account for the different groupings that occur in the phenomenologically different experiences surrounding a perceptually ambiguous picture. In order to illustrate this point, let me focus on a case of a perceptual ambiguity that concerns a mere two-dimensional array, the case presented by the following figure, a square that is the sum of nine smaller squares or tiles.

1	2	3
4	5	6
7	8	9

Figure 6.13 The ‘tiles’- figure

In this case, a perceptual ambiguity arises insofar as either the ‘diamond-organized’- tiles numbered 2, 4, 6, 8 or the ‘cross-organized’- tiles numbered 1, 3, 5, 7, 9 perceptually emerge. Since the contours of the two organizations overlap, the phenomenological switch between such organizations cannot refer to the fact that a certain area of the figure is spotted, rather than another one.³⁰⁷ Rather, fixing our gaze on certain points of the figure immediately favors a certain *holistic* grasping of it, while fixing our gaze on other points of the figure favors another holistic grasping of it.³⁰⁸

This case clearly shows that attention has a more active role in grouping than we might have expected, both in mere two-dimensional cases and in two-dimensional cases seen three-dimensionally, the cases that two-dimensional pictures (as well as accidental images) exemplify. We grasp a certain grouping of a merely two-dimensional figure, or of a picture's vehicle for that matter, once our fixing a given point of the figure (of the vehicle) allows us to perceive the *whole* figure (vehicle) in a certain way. Point fixing and overall apprehension of the figure (vehicle) co-operate in order for a certain organization to emerge. Changing the point of fixation is relevant only insofar as this change enables another overall apprehension of the figure (vehicle) to co-operate with it in order for another organization to emerge.

Now, if attention plays the above active role, then it is clear why grouping properties can still be legitimately qualified as weakly mind-dependent properties. First, they are *weakly* mind-dependent, for grouping primarily traces back to a 'polar' ordering of the elements of the relevant item (a mere two-dimensional figure, a picture's vehicle), that is, a directional ordering in the publicly available space. In this respect, we do not have to fear that such properties are in the eye of the beholder, as we might justifiably suspect if they were strongly mind-dependent properties. To be sure, non-human organisms might grasp different such properties, insofar as these properties might well go unnoticed. Sometimes, this failure to notice already happens with human beings, when they fail to grasp either 'aspect-dawning'- pictures as such or the perceptual ambiguity of perceptually ambiguous pictures.³⁰⁹ Yet if those non-human organisms were to grasp such additional properties, this would not depend on their alleged different subjective character, but rather on the fact that in this concern such organisms would be more subtle detectors than humans.

Yet second, grouping properties are still weakly *mind*-dependent. For without a mind that performed the attention operation by focusing a certain organization of those elements, grouping properties would not exist.³¹⁰ To put it alternatively, a grouping order of the pictorial vehicle's elements obtains independently of one's perception insofar as it relates such elements to a 'polar' orientation having a certain 'origin – end'-direction. Yet such an order would not exist without a perceptual *ordering*, namely, if

one's perception did not establish such an order by means of the appropriate holistic work performed by one's attention. Now, such an establishment is certainly not magic. Anyone who faces the picture's vehicle (from an appropriate vantage point) would perform the very same grouping operation by means of properly attending to that vehicle.³¹¹ That selection simply gives the ordering necessary for the elements to be arranged in the appropriate order, as it happens in many other cases. Let us consider syntax, for instance. As one well knows, a structurally ambiguous sentence is a sentence that, depending on different syntactic parsings, has different meanings (as Groucho Marx was well aware of when he said "I shot an elephant in my pyjamas"). The syntagmatic parsings of the words involved in such sentences give them different orders out there, so to speak. Yet if there were no individual to do the parsings, such parsings would not exist.³¹²

All in all, therefore, grouping properties are weakly mind-dependent properties that, although they need mental work to exist, are objective like any property that does not weakly depend on the mind. In chap. III, we have already encountered a case of an objective property that is weakly mind-dependent, insofar as it depends on a geometrical viewpoint: *outline shape*, the property of subtending a certain solid angle from an object's contours to a point of view. That solid angle is out there so to speak; given a certain point of view, anyone would subtend the very same angle from that point to that object. Yet the point of view is a point of *view*: no viewers, no outline shapes. Now, if we have agreed that outline shapes are objective, then the more we are likely to agree that grouping properties are objective, as well. For outline shapes capture perspectives, modes in which objects present themselves to subjects. Yet as we have seen before, one and the same item has the same grouping properties throughout different perspectives.

In the recent literature, there is a widespread tendency to accept mind-dependent objects in the overall domain of what there is, such as social objects, like institutions, laws and nations, and even fictional objects, insofar as they are kinds of social objects.³¹³ If we accept mind-dependent *objects*, it is time we start accepting mind-dependent *properties*.

2. *The Emergence of the Known Illusion*

As I said before, by adhering to what Hopkins asserts with regards to seeing-in, however enriched it may be, design-seeing is generative: it brings one to grasp a scene that is not actually where the perceiver is located. Yet how can one such scene emerge from the fact that the perceiver is perceiving a certain vehicle with its own features? As I hinted at, in order for this emergence to occur the two folds of a state of seeing-in, the configurational and the recognitional fold, must integrate their contents. As a result, the two folds are not only inseparable, as Wollheim had hoped, but are also such that the latter depends on the former. Yet how does such an integration exactly work?

Once we rely on grouping properties, the answer to these questions arises naturally. As we saw, grouping operations may occur not only when a merely two-dimensional item, but also when a two-dimensional item that is seen three-dimensionally, is at stake (not to mention genuinely three-dimensional items, in particular those purportedly endowed with a figurative value, like manikins, puppets and statues). Now, when grouping occurs in the first two dimensions only, no figurative import results. Sticking again to perceptually ambiguous figures, one and the same two-dimensional item is simply seen once one way, i.e., as a certain two-dimensional figure, and again another way, i.e., as another such figure. As we have seen, this holds true not only of two-dimensional items that will subsequently receive no three-dimensional perceptual reading, such as the Mach figure, the 'square-kite'- figure, or the 'tiles'- figure, but also of two-dimensional items that may also be perceptually read three-dimensionally, as e.g. the 'double cross'- figure, or even the 'duck-rabbit'- picture when it is merely two-dimensionally seen either in a 'duck-like' way or in a 'rabbit-like' way.

Yet, once one groups an item's elements not only under the first and the second dimension but also along the third dimension, one immediately sees a scene in that item. That is to say, the item transforms itself into an item endowed with a figurative value. In an alternative formulation of the same point, once a certain perception of a picture's vehicle is suitably enriched so as to also arrange the vehicle's elements into

relationships in the third dimension, that perception immediately becomes a configurational fold that is accompanied by a recognitional fold in which one (knowingly illusorily) sees that vehicle as another thing, a three-dimensional one. In other terms, once the grouping of the vehicle's elements is also performed along depth, such a vehicle (knowingly illusorily) comes to be seen as another thing, something three-dimensional.³¹⁴ In a nutshell, a figurative value arises for a picture's vehicle only once a ground in it becomes a *background*. Once the configurational fold is properly enriched, the recognitional fold of a seeing-in state makes its appearance as well, as the known illusion of the picture's vehicle as a certain three-dimensional scene. So, not only does the content of the recognitional fold suitably match the content of the corresponding configurational fold, but the former fold also depends on the latter. Clearly, this dependence is *existential*: the recognitional fold would not exist if the configurational fold did not exist as well. Yet it is also and above all *motivational*: the fact that the configurational fold has the enriched content it has provides evidential grounds, a *reason*, in order for the recognitional fold to have the knowingly illusory content it has. Thus, the fact that (in the recognitional fold) we see a certain scene as being present before us is surely not a miracle, nor is it a mere contingency, due to our brainy apparatus's reactions to the light emitted by certain light surfaces. Rather, such a seeing is *justified* by our perception (in the configurational fold) of a suitably enriched vehicle.³¹⁵

Once again, perceptually ambiguous pictures allow us to see this point quite vividly. Let us again consider the Rubin vase. Once we group (in the configurational fold) the white patch as standing *before* the black patches, we also see the picture (in the recognitional fold) as a white vase in front of a black background. Yet once we group (in the configurational fold) the white patch as standing *behind* the black patches, we also see the picture (in the recognitional fold) as two black faces (in profile) in front of a white background. The content of the recognitional fold of *one* seeing-in state with that perceptually ambiguous picture suitably matches the content of the configurational fold of the very same mental state. The same happens with the content of the recognitional fold of *another* seeing-in state with that picture. As a result, the recognitional fold of

one such state depends (not only existentially but also motivationally) on the configurational fold of that state.

Now, what happens in stylized cases, such as the Rubin vase, also happens in more complex cases involving perceptually ambiguous pictures. Let us consider the following picture. We see it quite naturally as a picture of the head of the former President of the European council Herman Van Rompuy set in front of a sample of the EU flag, a circle of yellow stars on a blue ground, that is partially occluded by Herman's head.



Figure 6.14 A 'haloed' Van Rompuy (personal photo)

Yet seeing the picture this way relies on having grouped the elements in its vehicle corresponding to Herman's face as standing before all of the other elements in that vehicle. Yet, let us suppose that we were to group the yellow elements previously seen as parts of a flag standing behind Herman's face as rather surrounding Herman's hair. In this case we see the picture as a picture of a 'haloed' Van Rompuy (a head surrounded by a halo) set in front of a bluish background. Content matching between the folds of the relevant seeing-in experience as well as (both existential and motivational) dependence of the recognitional fold on the configurational fold of such an experience occur here as well.

Moreover, let us once again consider the 'duck-rabbit'- picture. As I said before, we can already group its elements differently along the first two dimensions, just as in the Mach figure, the 'square-kite'- figure, or the 'tiles'- figure for that matter. In such a

case, we see the figure either as a two-dimensional ‘duck-like’ silhouette or as a two-dimensional ‘rabbit-like’ silhouette. Yet in order to see something, actually two somethings, in it, we must also group its elements along the third dimension; we must see the ‘duck-like’ silhouette in front of a background and the ‘rabbit-like’ silhouette in front of a background, respectively. By performing this three-dimensional grouping, we again group that picture’s elements in either a ‘duckish’ or a ‘rabbitish’ way. Yet once we perform that grouping, we also see the picture’s vehicle as either a duck or a rabbit, in a knowingly illusory way. In a nutshell, in this case, too, the recognitional fold unfolds itself once the configurational fold has properly unfolded itself as well. Once again, therefore, with regards to the relevant seeing-in mental states of that picture, content matching between folds and fold (existential and motivational) dependence of the recognitional on the configurational fold occur here as well.

Perhaps we would see this sort of dependence more clearly if we were to label the two folds of one and the same seeing-in state as two different forms of seeing-as. If, as we have seen, on the one hand, the recognitional fold is a kind of *illusory seeing-as*,³¹⁶ a *knowingly* non-veridical seeing the picture’s vehicle as a certain item, then on the other hand, in its being fundamentally qualified by its grasping grouping properties, the configurational fold may be taken as an *organizational seeing-as*, a seeing the pictorial vehicle’s elements as being organized in a certain way. While organizational seeing-as may also occur in isolation, for instance with mere two-dimensional figures having no figurative value, the kind of illusory seeing-as which characterizes the recognitional fold occurs only when both existentially and motivationally grounded by organizational seeing-as.³¹⁷ In a nutshell, the seeing-in folds are different kinds of seeing-as states; as Wittgenstein said, “Here [with seeing-as] there is an enormous number of interrelated phenomena and possible concepts.” (Wittgenstein 2009⁴:II,§155).

This way of accounting for the recognitional fold’s dependence on the configurational fold is very important. First of all, it grounds a point of departure for the syncretistic account of seeing-in from Wollheim’s account. As I have already said in the previous chapter, *pace* Wollheim there is just *one and the same* state of seeing-in

endowed with a generic content as regards a picture that may be representationally but not perceptually ambiguous. In the example that I have used many times, we do not have a certain seeing-in state when seeing St. Louis in Piero's fresco and another seeing-in state when seeing Michael Schumacher in it. Rather, in the fresco we still see a man of a certain kind, independently of whether the fresco additionally counts as a picture of St. Louis, as it indeed does, or as a picture of Schumacher, as may be the case if different negotiations concerning its aboutness were to take place. At most, therefore, the fresco might be representationally yet not perceptually ambiguous, if in different contexts it were taken as a picture of St. Louis and as a picture of Schumacher (as is actually the case with the 'Madonna-Evita' - picture I recalled in chaps. I and III). Now, the mental constancy consisting of proceeding to see a man of a certain kind in the fresco depends on the fact that in the configurational fold of the only state of seeing-in affecting that fresco, only *certain* grouping properties of the fresco are mobilized, in such a way that such a state is forced to have a *certain* recognitional fold in which the fresco is (knowingly illusorily) seen as a man of a certain kind. In order for that fresco to be hypothetically surrounded by *another* seeing-in state, *other* grouping properties of the fresco would have to be mobilized, in such a way that a different configurational fold would occur as bounding a different recognitional fold. This is what actually happens with perceptually ambiguous pictures. As I have said all along with regards to such pictures, once we grasp grouping properties of the relevant picture's vehicle that are different from those that have already been grasped, we entertain a different seeing-in state with respect to that picture. To repeat, in the 'duck-rabbit' - case, once we group the picture's vehicle in a 'duckish' way, we see a duck in it, while once we group that vehicle in a 'rabbitish' way, we see a rabbit in it.

Moreover, once we put things this way, it is easy to understand why, in seeing-in, we perceive a scene to be present in the recognitional fold and non-present in the configurational fold at one and the same time, for we perceive something else to be present there (i.e., the picture's vehicle). Once we group the elements of such a vehicle along depth, the known perception of that vehicle is responsible of the known illusion that we perceive, in the very same space, a scene that we know it is not there. As I

hinted at in the previous chapter, unlike the picture's vehicle, because of this situation we feel that that scene is not there. Just as we realize that we are illusorily perceiving that scene due to the fact that we are perceiving the picture's vehicle by suitably grouping its elements, on the one hand, we are forced to perceive the scene as being present but, on the other hand, we cannot feel the scene as being present.

As we saw in the previous chapter, the lack of this feeling of presence may explain why the three-dimensionality of the scene looks more apparent than real. This way of looking is even more corroborated once the recognitional fold of a seeing-in state is grounded on a configurational fold in which the three-dimensional grouping of a two-dimensional vehicle's elements depends on the projection of depth on such a vehicle.

We find ourselves in the same overall situation when we perceptually grasp the similarity an individual has with one of her relatives. In knowingly perceiving the former individual to be there, we are also forced to perceive what we know (and feel) is not the case, i.e., that the latter individual is there. As Wittgenstein said, "I observe a face, and then suddenly notice its likeness to another. I *see* that it has not changed; and yet I see it differently. I call this experience 'noticing an aspect'." (2009⁴, II, xi, § 113).

This comparison is not accidental. For in such circumstances we tend to say that we see that relative *in* the original individual. We may describe that perception of similarity as a perception of a *partial transfiguration* of the original individual. It is a transfiguration, for in virtue of the fact that such a relative is seen in that individual, the latter undergoes a change in its perceptual appearance. Yet this transfiguration is partial, for the individual is still seen as she was before. Saint Paul believed that Christ's resurrected body counted as a figurative image of God, or better of the divinity; a (super)natural image, an image that is not man-made. Yet that image relied precisely on the perception of Christ's body as being partially transfigured, a perception that some Apostles anticipated as they saw Christ's partially modified appearance on Mount Tabor.³¹⁸ Therefore, the perception of Christ's partial transfiguration may be taken as a model for this very kind of perception.

In point of fact, these reflections are just another way of saying that seeing-in is a *sui generis* perceptual state. Whatever one compares a seeing-in state to is simply another case of that state.

3. *The Conceptual Character of the Recognitional Fold*

At this point, however, an insidious question arises. Once we accept that the recognitional fold of a seeing-in mental state concerning a certain picture so easily follows a suitably enriched configurational fold, is that fold not superfluous in order for the picture to have a figurative value, as the enriched configurational fold sufficiently satisfies that purpose?

To be sure, one may immediately reply, along with Wollheim, that the recognitional fold of a seeing-in mental state, hence the state of seeing-in as a whole, is necessary for this concern if we wish for the figurative content of a picture to be suitably rich; it is not a sort of Haugelandian bare bones content. Put alternatively, unlike a bare bones content,³¹⁹ the figurative content of a picture may well mobilize properties that are not instantiated by the picture's vehicle itself. To stick to an example provided by Wollheim himself, when we face Nicolas Poussin's *Landscape with Saint John on Patmos*, we do not merely grasp, say, variations of incident light with respect to a certain direction, the variations we see instantiated in the vehicle of Poussin's masterpiece. Rather, in that painting we see a character sitting among classical ruins of columns that had collapsed hundreds of years prior.³²⁰ The figurative content of the painting, therefore, is as rich as the content of that recognitional fold.

Yet, if this is why we need such a fold, the objector may further retort, how can we go on justifying Wollheim's idea that the seeing-in state as a whole has a perceptual character? The risk is that once it is so conceived, the enriched configurational fold is still really perceptual, while the recognitional fold is merely interpretative. Indeed, it has an observational, yet not a properly perceptual nature, as some may say.³²¹

In order for us to properly appreciate the problem, let me return to the case of the 'aspect dawning'- pictures, which I have taken to be the paradigmatic case of pictures.

Let us consider the picture of horses once again. Let us suppose that the vehicle of this picture is seen in a ‘horsish’ way in the enriched configurational fold of a seeing-in state. In this case, what else is added to the picture’s figurative value by the fact that the recognitional fold of that state amounts to (knowingly illusorily) seeing that vehicle as some horses? To be sure, we may well need the latter fold if we wish for the figurative value of the picture to be sufficiently rich, so as to properly take into account the fact that we say that we see *some horses* in it. However, does this not mean that when facing the picture we first *see* it in a ‘horsish’ way, in the seeing-in configurational fold, that we then merely *interpret* it as some horses, in the recognitional fold of that state, in such a way that such a fold loses any proper perceptual character?

To answer this insidious question, I must once more recall the idea Wollheim repeatedly stressed that a pictorial experience is a *sui generis* perceptual mental state, which is different from both a mere genuine perception of the picture’s vehicle and the genuine perception of what is seen in such a vehicle.

As to a genuine perception in general, it may well be the case that one can tell the full-fledged perceptual elements of such a perception from the merely interpretative elements of it. As is well known, many people distinguish between *early perception*, which enables a perceiver to *individuate* an object in her surroundings, and *late perception*, which enables the perceiver to *reidentify* the object as one and the same entity at different times. However, these people go on to claim that only early perception is genuinely perceptual, it is a way of perceptually grasping the things out there; late perception is just a matter of interpreting of the perceptual data.³²² Moreover, as these people go on to say, the early perceptual component of a genuine perception can be further unpacked into a primary sketch, in which the perceived objects’ contours are grasped, and a 2½D sketch, in which depth hence distance relations among the perceived objects are grasped.³²³ By being so conceived, the second constituent of early perception, the 2½D sketch, mobilizes grouping properties as well. For, as we have seen, such properties are also responsible for depth-involving matters, i.e., of things like the fact that something is seen in front of or behind something else.

Yet if this is really the case, *pace* the above people it shows why unlike a genuine perception, a recognitional fold is required as far as a seeing-in state is concerned, in order for that state to have its distinctive perceptual character. For if that fold did not contribute to the fact that the seeing-in state has its distinctive perceptual character, that state would be indistinguishable from a state in which we merely mistook the picture's vehicle as the item we see in it: the state in which we are misled by a genuine *trompe-l'oeil*, as we saw before. Yet, as we will now see, this is definitely not the case.

True enough, the latter state may well be described as a case of a genuine yet non-veridical perception of the item we mistake the *trompe-l'oeil* for (say, a violin). Hence, it may be more precisely assessed as a state in which by means of early perception we individuate the *trompe-l'oeil* and by means of late perception we misreidentify it as the very item we mistake the *trompe-l'oeil* for. Thus, one may well say that in such a state the individuating component is its genuinely perceptual component, while its (mis)reidentificational component is just an interpretative byproduct. Yet as we already know, a state in which we merely seem to see a certain item, as the mere misperception of a picture's vehicle as that very item certainly is, is quite different from a corresponding state of seeing-in in which, in seeing the picture's vehicle, we see that vehicle as such an item. In the latter case, like the above misperception we still perceive that very item as being out there. Yet unlike that misperception, in so perceiving that very item the seeing-in state simply recombines that misperception as its knowingly illusory component: the recognitional fold. For, as I said in the previous chapter, that item is also taken as not being out there, insofar as in the configurational fold of that very state the vehicle is veridically perceived to be out there. As a result, the recognitional fold of a seeing-in state cannot be treated as a mere interpretative byproduct of an already perceptual state. In point of fact, when a genuine non-veridical perception is embedded as the recognitional fold of a seeing-in state, it is no longer the same perceptual state it is when it occurs in isolation. For given that *another thing*, the picture's vehicle, is veridically given in the configurational fold of the seeing-in state, in the recognitional fold that very picture's vehicle is knowingly

illusorily *seen as a different item of kind F*, it is not merely interpreted as such. As it would rather be the case if that fold were not a fold, but simply a seeming to see something, occurring in isolation. Thus, once folded in this way that state changes its content in a way that affects its perceptual character, as well as the perceptual character of the seeing-in state in which it is embedded.

Let me analyze this point more in detail. When a genuine non-veridical perception of the picture's vehicle as a certain item occurs in isolation, it has a certain *non-conceptual* content, which is only subsequently – in late perception – interpreted in conceptual terms. This non-conceptual perception is conceptually interpreted as a (non-veridical) perception of *a thing of a certain kind*. Yet once such a perception is embedded as a fold of a seeing-in state, it has a different, *conceptual* content. For *qua* such a fold that perception is, as I have repeatedly said, a knowingly illusory component of the seeing-in state. Such a knowingly illusory characteristic depends on the fact that there is another fold in that state, the configurational fold, in which the picture's vehicle is known to be veridically perceived. Being so knowingly illusory, the genuine non-veridical perception in which the recognitional fold consists falls under a *report awareness*, i.e., under the kind of awareness that, unlike phenomenal awareness, involves conceptualization of the perceptual contents it applies to. This fold is not *interpreted* as being about a thing of a certain kind, but rather it is a *perception* as of that thing. Thus, *qua* recognitional fold a certain state is perceptually different than when it occurs in isolation. When it occurs in isolation, as in merely mistaking the picture's vehicle for a thing of a certain kind, the conceptual import of that state does not affect its perceptual character; such an import is a mere conceptual interpretation of that state.³²⁴ Yet when it occurs as embedded in a seeing-in state, that conceptual import does affect the perceptual character of that state; it qualifies its being a knowingly illusory perception as of a thing *of a kind K*. For by applying report awareness to such a fold, we know that such a thing is not a thing *of the same kind* as the thing we veridically perceive in the configurational fold, i.e., the picture's vehicle.

We already saw that the recognitional fold is different in mode from a corresponding merely illusory perception. For unlike the latter, is not colored by a

feeling of presence as to the scene it is perceived in it as present. As a result, both in its lacking that feeling and in its intrinsic conceptuality, that fold distinctively contributes to the *sui generis* perceptual character the seeing-in state embedding it possesses.

In order to illustrate this situation vividly, let us first consider a purely three-dimensional case in which one first mistakes a wax statue for a human being and then realizes that what she is facing is a sculpture. Before her realization, the perceiver has a mere unitary perceptual state in which she merely seems to see a human insofar as she takes the statue as a human. Hence, in such a perceptual state she individuates something and (mis)interprets that something as a human. Thus, the notion of *being a human* is utterly external to that perception, it is just an interpretative byproduct of that perception. After her realization, however, things change. Now the sculpture is knowingly perceptually given to the perceiver (in the configurational fold of the relevant seeing-in state). Thus, the perceiver's conceptual taking it *as a human* is no longer a (mis)interpretation. Rather, it is a knowingly illusory reidentification of that very individual – a sculpture – as another individual differently conceptualized, as a thing of a different kind than the sculpture: a human being. As such, this conceptual reidentification is no longer external to the perceptual character of what has become the recognitional fold of a twofold mental state in which, as I said, the perceiver also perceives (in the other, configurational, fold) the sculpture to be out there; that fold is a (knowingly illusory) perception as of *a human being*. Moreover, because of this situation, in this conceptual reidentification the human being perceived to be there is not also felt to be there. Besides, *mutatis mutandis*, the same happens in a partially two-dimensional case in which one first mistakes a *trompe-l'oeil* for a human being and then realizes that what she is facing is a *trompe-l'oeil*, by proceeding to see that human being *in* it.

As a result of this overall situation, the state of seeing-in as a whole is a *strongly cognitively penetrable* state, i.e., a state such that not only its phenomenal character (when there is one, namely in conscious seeing-in), but also its content is permeable by states of their subjects' cognitive systems, hence by the concepts that constitute the content of such states. For the content of its recognitional fold is constituted by the same

concepts that constitute the content of the latter states.³²⁵ Moreover, since the figurative content of a picture is the same as the content of the seeing-in's recognitional fold, its content is conceptual as well.³²⁶

Yet, one might further retort to the syncretist, does our perceptual understanding of pictures really need concepts? Let us again consider perceptually ambiguous pictures. With respect to the 'duck-rabbit'- picture, can one who masters neither the concept of *being a duck* nor the concept of *being a rabbit* not entertain the relevant phenomenal switch? If this is the case, does this not show that the content of either seeing-as experience that the picture mobilizes is utterly non-conceptual, it is again at most interpreted as conceptual?³²⁷

First of all, the syncretist might reply that empirical evidence goes against this hypothesis: children younger than four-years-old who do not possess the relevant concepts are unable to entertain the switches concerning a perceptually ambiguous picture.³²⁸ Yet even if contrary to such an evidence it turned out that individuals without such a mastery are able to perform the relevant phenomenal switch,³²⁹ this would only prove that the conceptual content of an overall seeing-in state is *less* fine-grained than we expected. That content must be accounted for in terms of a certain conceptual *disjunction* rather than in terms of a *single* concept. In other terms, we would discover that the figurative content identical with the content of the recognitional fold of *one* seeing-in state concerning that picture is even more general than we would have expected. Therefore, it might seem that a mere interpretative level is involved in a recognitional fold, for one can indifferently describe the relevant scene that fold captures either by means of a concept or by means of another concept. Yet rather, the point is that such a fold is strongly cognitively penetrated by means of a more general concept that covers all the concepts involved in such descriptions. A fortiori, since it is identical with the content of that fold, the figurative content of the picture involved is conceptually more general than we would have expected, as well.

In this respect, it is interesting to note that, as regards a perceptually ambiguous picture, only some concepts prompt the relevant phenomenal switch. Let us consider once again the 'duck-rabbit'- picture and suppose we see a duck in it. If we were to see

a *goose* in it, we would still have the same seeing-in state. In order to entertain the relevant phenomenal switch, we would have to see a *rabbit* in it, for example. Let us suppose, on the other hand, that we see in that picture precisely a rabbit, as a result of having another seeing-in state concerning it. If we were to see a *hare* in it, we would still have the same state. We would have to see a *duck* in it, for example, in order to entertain the relevant phenomenal switch.

Now, this situation can be precisely accounted for by saying that in its knowingly illusory recognitional fold, a certain seeing-in state has a conceptual content whose extension is broader than what one originally supposed; namely, an extension that coincides with that of the disjunction of the concepts that are mobilized in the perceptually appropriate descriptions of that fold.

Properly speaking, therefore, we should not say that a certain seeing-in state concerning e.g. the ‘duck-rabbit’- picture is the state it is independently of whether its recognitional fold is interpreted either as the (knowingly illusory) seeing the picture as a duck or as the (knowingly illusory) seeing the picture as a goose. Rather, we should say that such a seeing-in state is the state it is insofar as in its recognitional fold, it is the (knowingly illusory) *seeing* the picture as an *anatid* (i.e., either as a duck or as a goose). Likewise, we should not say that another seeing-in state affecting the same picture is the state it is independently of whether its recognitional fold is interpreted either as the (knowingly illusory) seeing of the figure as a rabbit or as the (knowingly illusory) seeing of the figure as a hare. Rather, we should say that such a seeing-in state is the state it is insofar as in its recognitional fold, it is the (knowingly illusory) *seeing* the picture as a *leporid* (i.e., either as a rabbit or as a hare).³³⁰

All this would not have surprised Wollheim. For he definitely maintained that seeing-in is a conceptual experience, hence a strongly cognitively penetrable experience. Against defenders of the so-called modularity of perception, those who believe that perception, or better early perception, is cognitively impenetrable, he replied that “whatever role we might give to the role of modularity in perception, there is obviously a level of complexity above which it doesn’t apply, and there is reason to think that picture perception lies outside its scope” (2003a:10).³³¹ I have just located this

conceptualization in the genuine non-veridical perception of the picture's vehicle as an item of *a certain kind*, once that perception counts as the recognitional fold of a seeing-in state.

4. *Objective Resemblance Returns from the Back Door*

After interpreting seeing-in in the above way, the question I previously raised in the last two chapters – whether seeing-in, interpreted in such a way, provides not only necessary, but sufficient conditions of figurativity – returns.

As we will recall, I ended chap. IV by saying that proponents of seeing-in must be able to guarantee that seeing-in not only have a genuinely perceptual character, but also not be the mere sum of the genuine veridical perception of the picture's vehicle and of the mere seeming to see the item seen in such a vehicle, as it may happen in a hallucination of that item. For if seeing-in were to amount to this mere sum, many things that clearly have no figurative value would implausibly turn out to have that value. If I hallucinate a pear while looking at the word "pear", for instance, that word does not acquire a 'pearish' figurative value. In chap. V, I said that in order to overcome this problem, the contents of the two seeing-in folds, the configurational and the recognitional, must be integrated in such a way that not only the second fold depends on the first, but at least the configurational fold (and actually, as we have just seen, the recognitional fold) is no longer the same state it would be if it were taken in isolation. In the previous Sections of this chapter it was illustrated how this integration must work. The configurational fold has a suitably enriched content insofar as it grasps not only the merely visible surface properties and the ordinary design properties of the picture's vehicle, but also the further design properties constituted by the grouping properties of that vehicle. As I said, the grasping of such grouping properties is specifically responsible for the emergence of an item in the picture's vehicle. Thus, the fact that the configurational fold has that enriched content grounds (both existentially and motivationally) the fact that the recognitional fold of the seeing-in experience shows up in terms of knowingly illusorily seeing the picture's vehicle as a certain item seen yet

not felt to be there. Moreover, given such a configurational fold, the seeing-as that constitutes the recognitional fold is not only a knowingly illusory state, but it also has a conceptual content – seeing the picture’s vehicle *as an item of kind F* – that it would not have if it were taken in isolation.

By taking all of this into consideration, I can now answer the above question. So conceived, seeing-in provides a necessary, but not yet a sufficient condition of figurativity. For grasping *certain* grouping properties of the picture’s vehicle is relevant for providing that vehicle with a certain figurative value *only insofar as* those properties are *approximately the same* as the grouping properties of the very item constituting that picture’s figurative content, i.e., the item one sees in such a vehicle; namely, the properties one could also grasp if one were to see that item face to face.³³² Thus, the fact that a picture roughly shares properties of that kind with the item it presents in its figurative content enables that picture to precisely have such a content. Since as we have seen the picture’s subject is just a selection of its figurative content, a fortiori it has roughly the same grouping properties as the picture’s vehicle.³³³

Let me put this point in other terms. Why is it that grasping *certain* grouping properties of the picture’s vehicle enables us to see an item of a certain kind in it, resulting in that vehicle having a *certain* figurativity – i.e., a certain figurative content – rather than *another* one – i.e., another figurative content? This is because those properties are roughly the same properties as the properties of the seen-in item, the properties we could grasp if we were to see that item face to face. Grasping these properties ‘anchors’ a certain seeing-in state in the picture’s vehicle in a way that bounds that vehicle to present only things that roughly have the same properties. Indeed, if *other* grouping properties of the picture’s vehicle were mobilized in the relevant seeing-in state, namely, properties that the seen-in item does not have, the picture would not have the same figurative value, but a different one. For the picture would then present a thing that roughly had these *further* grouping properties.

Once again, perceptually ambiguous pictures vividly illustrate this relevance of similarity in grouping properties. Why is it that the ‘duck-rabbit’- picture has either a certain figurative content – we see a duck (or better yet, an anatid, as I can now say) in

it – or another figurative content – we see a rabbit (or better yet, a leporid, as I can now say) in it? This is because in one case, we grasp roughly the same grouping properties in the vehicle that we would grasp if we were to see ducks (or anatids in general), while in the other case, we grasp roughly the same grouping properties in the vehicle that we would grasp if we were to see rabbits (or leporids in general).

Once I put things this way, the result is clearly unWollheimian. Wollheim repeatedly insisted that, in allegedly accounting for a picture's figurativity, a seeing-in experience of that picture relies on no similarity between the picture's vehicle and what one sees in it – the picture's subject being just a selection of what is seen in the picture, as I have repeated.³³⁴ Yet *pace* Wollheim, by appealing to grouping properties as what is roughly shared by both the picture's vehicle and the item seen in it, in accounting for a picture's figurativity I let the objective resemblance between a picture's vehicle and the item one sees in it return from the back door.³³⁵

In chap. III, I said that the extant criticisms to the objective resemblance theories of depiction left open an – admittedly narrow – path to allow for resemblance under a certain *single* yet loose respect between the picture's vehicle and, as I can now say, what is seen in it to be at least a necessary condition of figurativity. This condition is a necessary condition of depiction once what is taken to be the right-hand side term of the resemblance relation turns out to be what is selected from what is seen in the picture's vehicle; namely, the picture's subject. This subject may be either a particular individual (possibly, a non-existent one) or a generic item, i.e., any individual (again, possibly a non-existent one) of a certain kind. In the first case, the picture's vehicle resembles a particular individual (under the relevant respect), while in the second case, the picture's vehicle resembles any individual of the relevant kind (under the relevant respect). Now we can see how that narrow path can be pursued.

First of all, grouping properties constitute the only respect under which the picture's vehicle and what is seen in it must be similar in order for figurativity to occur. Moreover, since this respect is very broad, it is such that pictures produced in *any* kind of style can comply with it. A colored picture as well as a black and white one, a distorted as well as non-distorted picture may all be such that they roughly share their

grouping properties with what one sees in them. In a caricature of Charles Dickens, one can group its traits in order to see a Dickensian item in it just as in a normal picture of the famous British writer.



Figure 6.15 Sir Leslie Ward, *Caricature of Charles Dickens (1870)*, 1900; ARTstor Collection, Eyes of the Nation: A Visual History of the United States (Library of Congress)

Thus, the diversity constraint addressed by Lopes to objective resemblance theories, the claim that pictures can only resemble their subjects under different respects (chap. III), does not have to be met: pictures of any style can be similar to what can be seen in them *just* in grouping properties. Since this constraint does not have to be fulfilled, *pace* Lopes the intentionality constraint, the claim that one cannot read off from a picture what its subject is (chap. III again), can surely be fulfilled. As I have noted, when seeing something in a given picture, one grasps only its figurative content, not its pictorial content. The latter content must instead be selected, via negotiation, from the figurative content.

Let me expand a bit more as to why if the respect of similarity between pictures and what is seen in them is established by grouping properties, the diversity constraint does not have to be met. Not only pictures that are highly refined in linear perspective, but also pictures that do not adhere to such a perspective, like Egyptian paintings, medieval paintings and even Cubist paintings, are such that they are similar in grouping properties to what is seen in them. The same is also true of distorted pictures, like caricatures, as well as stylized pictures, such as stick figures, pattern poems, nominal

silhouettes and the like. Consequently, the similarity respect mobilized by all pictures is simply one and the same, admittedly loose, respect: similarity in grouping properties.

In point of fact, let us consider what enables a non-pictorial representation to be transformed into a pictorial representation, as in the case of the “Alfred Hitchcock”-silhouette I introduced in chap. II. This is precisely the fact that, unlike the non-pictorial representation (say, the standardly written name “Alfred Hitchcock”), the pictorial representation that non-pictorial representation is transformed into is such that the elements of the pictorial representation that the non-pictorial representation is transformed into can be grouped in a certain way — roughly the way in which what is seen in it (an Hitchcockian profile, for instance) can be grouped, as well.

Thus, the basic distinction subsisting between a highly refined painting on the one hand and a rough sketch on the other is that the figurative content of the latter has certainly a broader extension. For in its simplicity, the latter mobilizes grouping properties that are very general, hence they are shareable by a larger group of individuals.

Let me again compare Piero’s fresco to a stick figure, like those I introduced in the previous chapter. In Piero’s fresco, one can see St. Louis of Toulouse, Michael Schumacher and possibly a few other things, insofar as it presents *a man of a certain kind*. For this is what a properly articulated grouping of the fresco’s elements allows one to see in it; a grouping that the above individuals, and possibly a few others, share. Thus, the picture is a picture of St. Louis, but it might have even been a picture of the F1 pilot, for the two roughly share the same grouping properties with the fresco.

Now, let us suppose instead that Piero had intended to depict in his fresco Federico da Montefeltro, the famous Quattrocento Italian duke he has depicted elsewhere. In this case, he would have clearly failed to fulfil his intention. For no one can see Federico in that fresco, insofar as Federico possesses different grouping properties.

Now let us turn to the black and white stick figure I presented in the previous chapter. In it, one can see not only St. Louis and Michael, but many other humans, including Federico. For the figure merely presents *a human being*. Indeed, the simple

grouping of the figure's elements allows one to see this rather generic thing in it. Thus, the figure may be a picture of a young human male as well as of an adult, insofar as such individuals are both human beings and any human being roughly shares the same grouping properties with the figure. Yet if the author of such a figure had intended to depict an elephant, she would have still clearly failed to fulfil such an intention. For no one can see an elephant in it, insofar as elephants possess different grouping properties.

5. *The Core of the Syncretistic Theory*

On the basis of what I have said before, I am now finally able to state the core of the syncretistic theory of depiction. First of all, seeing-in so conceived and objective resemblance in grouping properties are both necessary and jointly sufficient conditions of a picture's figurativity, thus also functioning as a necessary condition of depiction.

On the one hand, objective resemblance in grouping properties between a picture's vehicle and what is seen in it is necessary for figurativity. For, as I have said, this resemblance explains why certain grouping properties are the properties to be grasped in the picture's vehicle by means of (the configurational fold of) a certain seeing-in state. On the other hand, one such seeing-in state, when so conceived, is also a necessary condition of figurativity. For, as I said above, grouping properties are weakly mind-dependent properties, i.e., 'polar orientation'-dependent properties whose existence relies on the very mental operation of attention through which they are grasped. Such an operation occurs in the configurational fold of a seeing-in state. By means of this occurrence, this operation allows an item of a certain kind to emerge as what is perceptually grasped in the recognitional fold of such a state.

Precisely because of the above situation, neither condition, when taken in isolation, is sufficient. Clearly, something can resemble something else in grouping properties – twins, in the paradigmatic case – and yet the latter is not seen in the former, leading the former to have no such figurative value. Moreover, as I said before, having a certain seeing-in experience as regards a picture's vehicle gives that vehicle a *certain* figurative value only insofar one grasps in it the grouping properties it roughly shares

with the item of a certain kind one sees in it. Yet once these two conditions are joint, they provide sufficient conditions of figurativity: a picture's vehicle has a certain figurative value if one has a certain seeing-in state involving that vehicle whose configurational fold grasps the grouping properties it roughly shares with the item of a certain kind one sees in it, more precisely in its configurational fold.

Joined together, these two necessary and jointly sufficient conditions of figurativity amount to one necessary condition of depiction: a picture's vehicle depicts a certain subject only if one has a certain seeing-in state regarding that vehicle whose configurational fold grasps the grouping properties it roughly shares with such a subject, which is a selection out of its figurative content. As such, this condition accounts for the fact that a picture is a *pictorial* representation. *Qua* the above (necessary and jointly sufficient) condition of figurativity, it may even be satisfied by things that are not pictures but that are just endowed with a figurative value, like accidental images.

To obtain both necessary and sufficient conditions of depiction, we must introduce the other necessary condition of depiction that accounts for the picture's intentionality, for what transforms a natural image into a picture or, equivalently, for the fact that a picture is a *representation*: a picture's vehicle depicts a certain subject only if it entertains the right causal/intentional relation with that subject. In conformity with what I said in chap. I, by a "right causal/intentional relation" I mean the relation that subsists between that vehicle and either a specific individual or any individual of a certain kind in virtue of either a natural relation or a certain negotiation among members of a community. Such a relation makes it the case that either the vehicle is about something or has a content (possibly, a merely generic one) that makes it assessable as to its truth or falsity. As such, this relation does not require that its right-hand side members exist. As we will see more in detail in the next chapter, there can at least be pictures of fictional individuals, such as Sherlock Holmes or unicorns. Moreover, the negotiation such a relation may involve may even be modulated in such a way, that it allows for pictures that are not perceptually, but just representationally ambiguous. Although a picture has just one figurative value, or in other terms there is just one figurative content that includes whatever one can see in it, it is agreed that it may be

ascribed different subjects in different contexts. This is the case in the ‘Madonna-Evita’-picture I have described since chap. I. Indeed, one can see in it both Madonna and Evita Peron, as well as a few other possible things; in brief, a somehow fascinating woman. Yet in certain contexts, ‘real’ contexts if you like, that picture with that figurative value counts as a picture of Madonna, the actress herself, while in other contexts, ‘fictional’ contexts if you like, that picture *with that very same figurative value* counts as a picture of Evita, the character Madonna plays in Alan Parker’s movie.³³⁶

To be sure, these conditions are both necessary yet only jointly sufficient conditions of depiction. For, in turn, the intentionality condition is also just a necessary condition of depiction. If a certain representation is in the right causal/intentional relation with something, but that something cannot be seen in it, that representation is not a pictorial representation of that very something, the former does not depict the latter. In other terms, its representational content is not a pictorial content. For the figurativity condition is violated.

Last but not least, I have formulated these conditions in order to comply with the loosely minimalist account I outlined in chap. I. For by appealing to seeing-in as yielding the figurativity condition of depiction, once suitably revised, I maintained that such a condition puts a constraint on what satisfies the intentionality condition. The subject a picture has, what gives it its pictorial content, must be compatible with the picture’s figurative content that is given via a certain seeing-in state. The right causal/intentional relation simply selects that subject among the other candidates that are as compatible with that figurative content as such a subject is. As a result of this situation, there can be, say, *pictures* of no longer existent saints, such as the Poussin painting cited above, if in those pictures we can see human beings.³³⁷ Yet there cannot be *pictures* of Jesus, but rather mere representations of him, if what we can see in such representations are just fish-like things. Finally, such a constraint forces certain pictures to be perceptually ambiguous pictures, in that they have different subjects depending on their different figurative values insofar as we can see them either one way or another. For instance, there can be a perceptually ambiguous *picture* that is *both* a picture of Louis-Philippe of Orleans *and* a picture of a pear, insofar as in that picture’s vehicle we

can see either a human being or a pear-like piece of fruit, respectively, provided that the respective groupings allow us to see either thing in such a vehicle. In the following famous pictorial group, this is what clearly happens with the second and the third caricature of the French king.

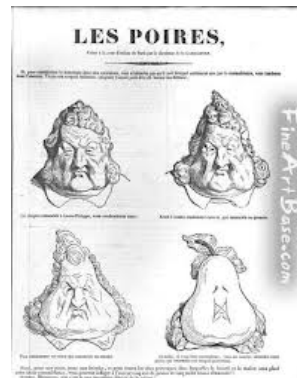


Figure 6.16 Charles Philippon, *Pears*, 1832; New York Public Library - ARTstor Collection, ARTstor Slide Gallery

All in all, therefore, we have arrived at the core claim of the syncretistic theory of depiction (CSC):

(CSC) an item P depicts a subject O , where O can be either a specific individual or any individual of a certain kind, iff i) one has a certain seeing-in state involving P whose configurational fold grasps the grouping properties P roughly shares with O , while its recognitional fold presents a thing of a kind under which O falls, and ii) P entertains the right causal/intentional relation with O .

Chapter VII

Applications, Consequences and Integrations of the Theory

1. Depiction and Sculptures

In dealing with pictures or anyway with items endowed with figurative value, I have hitherto spoken mostly of two-dimensional items that are seen three-dimensionally as three-dimensional items, or better yet, as scenes constituted by items of that kind. Yet, at this time, a question naturally arises: what about three-dimensional items like manikins, puppets and statues? Can they really have a figurative value just as the above two-dimensional items? Or, to take the question as directly involving three-dimensional representations: can sculptures be pictures, i.e., representations in a figurative mode?

In the literature on depiction, this question is answered in different ways. On the one hand, anti-sculptorialists in depictive matters maintain that sculptures are hardly pictorial representations.³³⁸ On the other hand, proponents of sculptures in such matters hold that there is no principled difference between two-dimensional pictures and sculptures. Thus, one can classify also the latter as depictions.³³⁹

One may naïvely support the latter opinion by remarking that somewhere between two-dimensional pictures and sculptures there are low reliefs. Low reliefs are really three-dimensional items whose objective depth, however, is rather insignificant. Can they fail to be pictures simply because they are slightly three-dimensional? Yet the actually non-present scenes that are discerned in them are three-dimensionally articulated in a way that is clearly unsupported by the depth that actually features them. Reverting to what was stated in chap. V, one such scene is seen as present as well yet it is not felt as present, leading its three-dimensionality to look more apparent than real. Just as with genuinely two-dimensional items, a perceiver can let such a three-dimensional yet non-present scene emerge in virtue of grasping a low relief's grouping properties also along depth.³⁴⁰

To be sure, an anti-sculptorialist in depictive matters might reply that low reliefs actually behave like high reliefs, that is, as something made by genuine three-

dimensional sculptorial items that are, however, simply placed on an essentially two-dimensional plane. So, if there is something pictorial in them, this results from the marks that are drawn on such a plane, not from the sculptorial items placed on it.³⁴¹

Yet as to low reliefs it is very hard to tell a three-dimensional sculptorial component from a two-dimensional pictorial component, so that the latter but not the former has a depictive import. For it seems, rather, that there is a *continuum* between low reliefs and two-dimensional pictures. In such a *continuum*, let us consider for instance a painting whose compositional technique provides the painting with a certain thickness that is determinant in order to establish what can be discerned in it. This is the case in many Van Gogh paintings, such as *Wheatfield with Crows*.



Figure 7.1 Vincent Van Gogh, *Wheatfield with Crows*, 1890; Rijksmuseum Vincent van Gogh, Amsterdam - ARTstor Collection, Art History Survey Collection

In this painting, how could we separate its pictorial component from its non-pictorial component? Yet if this is impossible with respect to paintings of this kind, why should it be possible with respect to low reliefs? All in all, therefore, there seems to be a natural transition leading from purely two-dimensional pictures to full-fledged sculptures. Therefore, if the former are pictorial representations, so are the latter.

Now, as to the theory of depiction defenders of seeing-in, as syncretists certainly are, should side themselves with the all-encompassing end of the controversy. For, as we have seen in chap. IV, Wollheim adds three-dimensional items such as clouds to the examples of accidental images, i.e., things that merely have figurative value but are no

pictures. For although one can see something in them as well – typically, animals – they have no subject, for they do not satisfy the intentionality condition of depiction.³⁴²

Prima facie at least, it is not a problem for the syncretist to account for the figurative value of sculptures and the like items. For, as we have already seen in the previous chapter, three-dimensional items also possess grouping properties. Thus, it seems that the syncretist may quite easily say that a three-dimensional item has a figurative value just in case it is surrounded by the appropriate state of seeing-in. In the configurational fold of such a state, a perceiver grasps in that item roughly the same grouping properties that the thing seen in it – the thing that the item is (knowingly illusory) seen as in the recognitional fold of that very state – possesses. Such a seen-in thing may well amount to a non-present scene that is seen as present, though not felt as such.³⁴³

Let us consider the block of marble representing Laocoön and his two sons fighting against the two sea snakes that will ultimately strangle them. The syncretist can well say that the marble block has a figurative value insofar as in it one can see two snake-like figures wrapped around three human-like figures. Moreover, the syncretist can go on to say that one can see such a complex in that block insofar as one groups the block's elements roughly in the same way as that very complex's elements are grouped. Finally, the syncretist can conclude, that block is definitely a depiction of Laocoön and his two sons fighting against two sea snakes. For among all the non-present scenes featuring two snake-like characters wrapped around three human-like characters, we have agreed that the block precisely represents that very scene.



Figure 7.2 Baccio Bandinelli, *Laocoön and His Sons*, 1520-25; Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence - Wikimedia Commons, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Laocoon_and_His_Sons.jpg

In order to dismantle this natural explanation, the anti-sculptorialist in depictive matters should point out a basic factor of difference that, appearances notwithstanding, prevents the standard syncretistic account from being applied to sculptures. Yet what might this factor be?

To be sure, there is a difference between two-dimensional pictures and sculptures. The non-present scene a two-dimensional picture lets one see in it is always given *from a certain perspective*, that is, as if it were perceived from just one and the same point of view. Yet the non-present scene a sculpture lets one see in it is not given from one such fixed perspective.³⁴⁴

As far as two-dimensional pictures are concerned, this difference is very important. For it clearly shows that the perspective *from* which the non-present scene is seen *in* one such picture, which I shall call the *internal* perspective, does not coincide with the perspective *from* which one *actually* sees that picture's vehicle, the *external* perspective: the former remains the same even if the latter changes. In the previous chapter, I have already hinted at this point. As I said then, the grouping operations one performs on a two-dimensional pictorial vehicle do not depend on the perspectives – external perspectives, as I can now say – from which one faces that vehicle. Such operations, I also said, are responsible for the fact that a non-present scene emerges in that very vehicle. Thus, the failure of grouping operations to depend on external perspectives explains why we can move around a picture's vehicle, so as to change our

external perspective on it (by looking at it from the side, say), and still see the same scene in it to be given from *the very same internal perspective*.³⁴⁵

Portraits clearly illustrate this point. We can move around a portrait, so as to see it from different external perspectives, yet we still have the feeling of being followed by the gaze of the particular subject *qua* depicted in that portrait, typically a certain human being. Yet we have no such feeling if we really meet such a being. For, while in reality we escape that being's gaze by assuming a different position with respect to her, we cannot escape that being's gaze *qua* depicted in a portrait insofar as she is still given to us from the same internal perspective however we move around that portrait.

This fixation of an internal perspective constitutes the very well-known phenomenon of perceptual constancy Wollheim himself pointed out to in order to provide further evidence in favour of his claim that pictorial experience is a seeing-in experience. For this phenomenon allegedly shows that in moving around a picture, one variously experiences its vehicle. This variety may well bring about a change in the configurational fold of a seeing-in experience one entertains when facing that picture. Yet, says Wollheim, what remains constant in that experience is certainly the recognitional fold from which one experiences the picture's subject.³⁴⁶ One might see this fixation of an internal perspective as a sufficient condition of seeing-in. As soon as one experiences a constancy in internal perspective (in the recognitional fold) accompanied by a variation in external perspective (in the configurational fold), what previously was a onefold perceptual experience – either a veridical experience of something or a non-veridical experience of that something as something else (as in the case of genuine *trompe-l'oeils*) – turns out to be a twofold seeing-in experience.

On the basis of such a difference between two-dimensional pictures and sculptures, a syncretist may further remark that there is a perceptually relevant difference between the recognitional fold that is involved in seeing a scene in a two-dimensional picture and the recognitional fold that is involved in seeing a scene in a sculpture. In sculptorial cases, we have the very same kind of perceptual expectation we have with respect to three-dimensional items endowed with no figurative value when seen face to face as to their external perspectives, namely the perceptual expectation

that, if we saw a scene in the sculpture from a different yet internal perspective, we would see that scene in it differently. For example, while seeing the Laocoön group in the marble block from a certain internal perspective, we have the expectation that, if we saw that group in that block from another internal perspective, we would see that group in it differently. While seeing Laocoön in that block from a frontal internal perspective, I have the expectation that I will see him in that block from a backwards perspective. This is the very same kind of perceptual expectation we entertain with regards to three-dimensional objects endowed with no figurative value when seen face to face, for instance the very humble pear I am facing at this very moment, with respect to external perspectives from which we see them. We see that, if we were to face such objects from another such perspective, we would see them differently.³⁴⁷ Yet, definitely no such perceptual expectation arises with regards to two-dimensional pictures, precisely because of the phenomenon of perceptual constancy. By looking e.g. at Antonello Da Messina's famous *Portrait of a Man*, I well know that, however I move around that painting, I will always see in it that fierce-looking man in the same way, that is, from the very same internal perspective. Of course, I can imagine the man's shoulders, but I have no perceptual expectation about them.

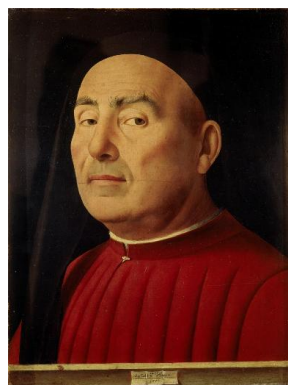


Figure 7.3 Antonello da Messina, *Portrait of a Man*, 1476; Museo civico, Turin (Italy) - ARTstor Collection, Italian and other European Art (Scala Archives)

Now, these differences may well provide the syncretist with a dividing line between two-dimensional pictures on the one hand and sculptures on the other hand, by allowing

her to classify low reliefs as two-dimensional pictures and high reliefs as sculptures. Like two-dimensional pictures, the non-present scene we see in a low relief is just given from a certain perspective. By moving around a low relief, we still see the non-present scene in it in the same way from the very same perspective; the real depth it possesses makes impossible for us to abandon such a perspective. Yet high reliefs are just like sculptures in that they display no privileged internal perspective.

Yet does this overall situation make it also the case that unlike a two-dimensional picture, a sculpture has no figurative value, hence it is not a depiction (over and above its being a representation)?

Clearly, this situation proves that I should spell out more in detail how resemblance in grouping properties between a picture's vehicle and what is seen in it actually works. For, as far as two-dimensional pictures alone are concerned, the pictorial vehicle's grouping properties one grasps in the configurational fold of a seeing-in state are roughly the same as the grouping properties that what is seen in (the recognitional fold of) such a state possesses as given *from a certain internal perspective*. Thus, as far as such pictures are concerned, the similarity that is relevant for figurativity must obtain between grouping properties *tout court* of the picture's vehicle and grouping properties of the non-present scene seen in it from a certain internal perspective.³⁴⁸

Once again, perceptually ambiguous pictures allow us to vividly grasp this point. Let us consider the following picture.

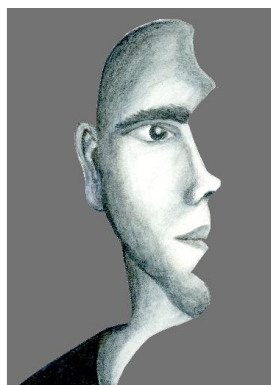


Figure 7.4 Perceptually ambiguous picture of a man given either frontally or in profile (by courtesy of Paola Tosti)

In this picture, we see either a part of a human face (as well as a part of a torso) given frontally or a human face (and a part of a torso) of the same kind³⁴⁹ yet given in profile. In the recognitional folds of the two different seeing-in states involved, two non-present scenes of the same kind are thus given yet from different fixed internal perspectives. For the syncretist, in order for this perceptually ambiguous picture to have two different figurative values, the two different relevant seeing-in states must involve two groupings of the elements of that picture's vehicle that (roughly) respectively correspond to the different groupings of the elements of the items involved in those scenes of the same kind yet given from different fixed internal perspectives. Thus, in the two perceptual readings of this picture, two scenes of the same kind are given yet from different fixed internal perspectives that respectively mobilize different groupings of the items involved in such scenes. Roughly, the very same different groupings are also respectively captured in the elements of the picture's vehicle by means of the different configurational folds of such seeing-in states.

Incidentally, this situation enables us to see why, like any other representation, pictures *aspectually* represent their subjects, as I said in chap. I. One may attend to Cervino, the alleged Italian mountain, as well as to Matterhorn, the alleged Swiss mountain, and yet fail to recognize that the two alleged mountains are none other than the very same mountain. Likewise, if one were to take a picture of Cervino on the one hand and a picture of Matterhorn on the other, one might fail to recognize that such things are nothing but the same mountain. For, as a syncretist may now say, on the one hand that mountain is depicted in the first picture from the 'Cervino'- aspect, insofar as that mountain from *this* aspect is selected out of what one sees in that picture, i.e., a mountain from a certain fixed internal perspective. On the other hand, that mountain is also depicted in the second picture yet from the 'Matterhorn'- aspect, insofar as that mountain from *this* aspect is selected from what one sees in that picture, i.e., again a mountain yet from another fixed internal perspective. Yet the perceiver of these pictures

may well fail to know what is depicted from the ‘Cervino- aspect and what is depicted from the ‘Matterhorn’- aspect are nothing but the same mountain.



Figure 7.5 A picture of Cervino (by courtesy of Paola Tosti)

Figure 7.6 A picture of Matterhorn (by courtesy of Paola Tosti)

All in all, therefore, as far a two-dimensional picture is concerned, a certain grouping affects the elements of the thing seen from a certain internal perspective in one such picture. This grouping must be similar to the grouping affecting the elements of the picture’s vehicle, in order for that thing to be seen in that picture. Clearly enough, on the contrary, the non-present scene one can see in a sculpture is not a scene given from a *certain* internal perspective. If we move around the sculpture, what we see in it is no longer given from the same internal perspective. Yet this situation would determine a basic difference between ordinary two-dimensional pictures and sculptures only if the scene were given from *no* internal perspective at all, rather than being simply given from *many different* internal perspectives; as a syncretist would be immediately, and perhaps commonsensically, prompted to say. For as far as a sculpture is concerned, the syncretist may precisely limit herself to saying that a certain non-present scene is seen in it from many different internal perspectives. As a result, for the syncretist a sculpture has a certain figurative value just in case the elements of the non-present scene seen in it are differently grouped according to the many different internal perspectives from which that scene is seen in it, so as to resemble the different ways in which the

sculptorial vehicle's elements are respectively grouped, this time however from corresponding yet external perspectives.

At this point, can it really be the case that, appearances notwithstanding, the relevant non-present scene is not seen in the sculpture from many different internal perspectives, but rather from no internal perspective at all?

Hopkins maintains that the latter option is the case. For, he says, internal perspectives affecting non-present scenes are a matter of successful intentions. As far as two-dimensional pictures are concerned, this condition is satisfied. For example, in painting the famous portrait of Federico da Montefeltro, Piero della Francesca intended for the Italian Quattrocento duke to be seen in profile; moreover, such an intention was fulfilled, for in that painting everyone sees the duke in profile. Yet, when it comes to sculptures, nothing similar happens. For example, in sculpting the *Laocoön*, its authors intended for no particular perspective to be grasped by their audience. Once they sculpted the block, anyone could simply discern in it the non-present scene it purportedly presents; there is no internal perspective from which the authors intended the scene to be given. Of course, the authors could have chosen to present another non-present scene, say a scene in which three humans strangle two sea snakes, by sculpting the relevant block differently. Yet if this had been the case, people would have simply discerned a different scene in the block; that is all there is to say on this matter.³⁵⁰

Yet first of all, if figurativity revolves around seeing-in, as Hopkins acknowledges, it sounds odd to place matters of intention into matters of figurativity. For as we have already seen, accidental images are such that one can see something in them even if no one intended that such a something be seen in them. Besides, since seeing-in occurs both with respect to two-dimensional cases and three-dimensional cases of accidental images, as I have already remarked in accordance with Wollheim, we simply have cases of seeing-in in which a non-present scene is seen from just one, though unintended, internal perspective – say, when we see a battle in a wall – and cases of seeing-in in which a non-present scene is indeed seen from many different, though unintended, internal perspectives – say, when we see an animal in a cloud.

Moreover, and perhaps more interestingly, as far as a sculpture is concerned, it is not the case that internal perspectives are never a matter of successful intentions. Sometimes at least, by appropriately locating the sculpture, the sculptor (or her clients for that matter) may well successfully intend for there to be some internal perspective, among all of the many different such perspectives, from which the non-present scene that is seen in it is so seen. Let us consider, for instance, the *Ecstasy of Saint Teresa*, Gianlorenzo Bernini's sculptorial masterpiece. As we well know, by looking at the statue from below, as tourists normally see it in the Cornaro Chapel of Santa Maria della Vittoria in Rome, we simply see in it the saint watched over by an angel, from a corresponding internal perspective. Yet if we look at the statue from above, an external perspective ordinarily tourists are prevented from entertaining, then we see in the statue, from the corresponding internal perspective, the saint transfigured by her ecstatic experience (as if she were experiencing an orgasm, as malicious people say, that spectators from that perspective are somehow voyeuristically enjoying). Let me put it this way. If a spectator were in the world of the non-present scene displayed by the sculpture, she would perceive that scene from a different perspective from the one from which she would have hitherto seen that very scene in that very world – a new perspective from which she should have acquired rather unexpected information as to the saint's emotional state. As a result, there is an internal perspective in the non-present scene such that Bernini (or his clients) successfully intended for that scene to be seen from that perspective (at least by a happy few – as if Bernini (or his clients) are winking at the *connoisseurs*, those delighted by their having recognized such a hidden intention).



Figure 7.7 Gianlorenzo Bernini, *Ecstasy of Saint Teresa*, 1647-52; Cornaro Chapel, S. Maria della Vittoria, Rome - Wikimedia Commons, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Santa_teresa_di_bernini_03.jpg

Figure 7.8 Gianlorenzo Bernini, *Ecstasy of Saint Teresa* (particular)

Incidentally, erotic (or pornographic) sculptures are not alone in this respect. Let us consider a Murano glass sculpture in which we see a sea scene at the center of which there lies a jellyfish. If we look at that sculpture from the side, you will hardly grasp a jellyfish in the sea scene it presents. We must frontally face the sculpture in order to see in it the jellyfish at the center of the scene. Once again, it is not external, but internal perspectives that count. For in themselves, external perspectives in a sculpture are all on a par: each, from its particular point of view, let us see just the sculpture. Hence, they do not reveal the fact that we can see something *in* that sculpture only from *some* perspectives. That is to say, they do not tell us what the sculptor (most likely intentionally) wanted there to be seen in that sculpture from only *some* of the internal perspectives corresponding to those external perspectives.

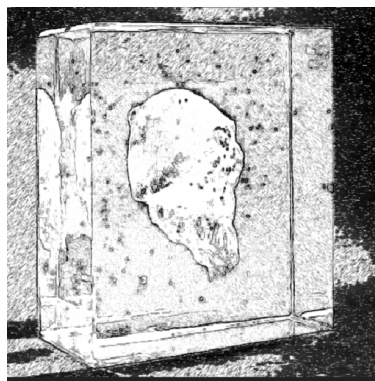


Figure 7.9 A Murano glass sculpture (by courtesy of Paola Tosti)

At this point, Hopkins would retort that there is no need to appeal to internal perspectives in the case of sculptures precisely because, unlike two-dimensional pictures, internal perspectives exactly match external ones. In two-dimensional pictures, we must refer to an internal perspective precisely because, given the phenomenon of perceptual constancy, there is no correspondence between external and internal perspectives: the picture's vehicle can be regarded from many different external perspectives, yet what is seen in it can be regarded from only one internal perspective. Yet as far as sculptures are concerned, whenever we wish to appeal to an internal perspective regarding what is seen in it, there is a corresponding external perspective regarding the sculpture's vehicle to which one we can instead appeal in order to account for what it is seen in it. Certainly, Hopkins goes on to say, if there were a reason to appeal to internal perspectives in sculptures even in spite of such a matching with external perspectives, then sculptorial internal perspectives would be indispensable. For instance, as far as matters of seeing-in with respect to sculptures are concerned, internal sizes are needed over and above external sizes. As is well known, sculptures do not preserve the sizes of the things one can see in them – as Hopkins remarks, one may well have a mini-statue of a lion, as is the case, he says, with some of Benvenuto Cellini's salt-cellars. So, even if there is a correspondence between the size of a sculpture and the size of the item seen in it, we cannot dispense with the latter if we wish to explain what one sees in that sculpture – in Cellini's relevant salt-cellar, we do not see a mini-lion, but a normal lion. Yet in the case of perspectives, adds Hopkins, there is no such need.

Whatever one wishes to explain regarding sculptorial seeing-in by appealing to internal perspectives can be explained by appealing to external perspectives.³⁵¹ Returning to the example of Bernini's Saint Teresa, one may say, on behalf of Hopkins, that in order to see the saint's alleged promiscuity in the sculpture, we do not need to appeal to an internal perspective from which we purportedly see the saint in this way. For it is enough to appeal to the corresponding external perspective from which we see the marble block in which we so see the saint.

I would disagree. Even if, as far as sculptures are concerned, there is such a correspondence between internal and external perspectives, this correspondence does not make internal perspectives explanatorily superfluous. First of all, just as two-dimensional pictures,³⁵² sculptures allow for discoveries as to what we see in them. Such discoveries may also involve the fact that items in the non-present scene that is seen in a sculpture do not stand between each other in the same perspectival relations in which the corresponding elements of the sculpture's vehicle stand between each other. Once again, erotic and even pornographic sculptures show us this point quite vividly. Let us suppose that, by looking at a sculpture from a certain external perspective a spectator suddenly discovers that some of the protagonists of the scene seen in it entertain a sexual relationship. This means that they come to be seen as standing between each other in a spatial intimacy that the corresponding parts of the sculpture's vehicle are not seen as having. Therefore, the external perspective in the sculpture's vehicle does not reveal by itself what the corresponding internal perspective in the non-present scene alone can reveal. Moreover, let us again consider a sculpture whose size dramatically differs from the size that the items of the non-present scene seen in it are seen as having, as is the case with the salt-cellar of a lion Hopkins recalls. The latter items are seen from a perspective that does not coincide with the external perspective from which the corresponding portions of the sculpture are seen. In the salt-cellar, the front legs of the lion seen in it are seen as being *significantly* closer to the spectator's internal point of view than the lion's back legs. Yet the corresponding portions of the salt-cellar are *not* so seen from the spectator's external point of view: the sculptorial

parts corresponding to the lion's front legs are simply seen as being *a bit* closer to that point of view than the parts corresponding to the lion's back legs.

All in all, therefore, *pace* Hopkins as far as sculptures are concerned internal perspectives are not explanatorily superfluous. As a result, there is ultimately no reason to prevent sculptures from having a figurative value. A sculpture simply has such a value just in case when facing it, we grasp roughly the same grouping properties from many different external perspectives that the thing we see in it possesses from many different corresponding internal perspectives.

Summing up, therefore, sculptures can be classified as pictures, i.e., as *pictorial* representations, or, equivalently, as items endowed with a figurative value that are also representations, just as two-dimensional pictures. Simply put, unlike the latter, the non-present scenes they present are seen in them from many different internal perspectives. As a result, the similarity in grouping properties that is relevant for their figurativity holds between the grouping properties of the sculptorial vehicles' elements from many different external perspectives and the grouping properties of the things seen in them from many different corresponding internal perspectives.

It is easy to see how the above thesis is powerful. For, once we consider actors as living statues – as we are prompted to do when so-called religious plays involving ordinary people playing the roles of Christ, saints and the like are at stake – then actors, too, both have a figurative value and are pictures of their subjects (once they are further taken to be representations of such subjects).³⁵³

As a further consequence, unlike grouping properties of two-dimensional items, grouping properties concerning three-dimensional items – whether seen in a two-dimensional picture or in a sculpture, or even when seen face to face – depend not only on a mind that groups them according to a certain 'polar' orientation, but also on perspectives: just one internal perspective for items seen in two-dimensional pictures, many different perspectives for items seen in sculptures. As we have already seen in the previous chapter, however, perspectives are just another kind of objective yet mind-dependent properties. For they amount to *outline shapes*, where an outline shape is, as we already know from chap. III, the solid angle one subtends to an item's contours from

a given point of *view*. So, unlike grouping properties of two-dimensional items, grouping properties of three-dimensional items are *doubly* mind-dependent: they depend on attention on the one hand and on perspectives viz. outline shapes on the other hand. To be sure, however, this situation makes those grouping properties differ not in their *identity* conditions – i.e., in what makes such properties be the kind of properties they are – but just in their *existence* conditions – i.e., in what allows such properties to be instantiated: a double dependence in the latter case, a single dependence in the former case. In other terms, not only the mind-dependence of grouping properties of three-dimensional items, but also their dependence on perspectives is existential: grouping properties of such items would not exist if there were no such perspectives. Since this latter dependence does not concern grouping properties of such items in their identity or nature, then grouping properties of two-dimensional items may go on resembling grouping properties of three-dimensional items, as the syncretist requires in order for the former to depict the latter.

For the syncretist, therefore, outline shape returns from the back door, yet not as the relevant respect of resemblance between pictures and their subjects (as directly in Hyman's and indirectly in Hopkins' respective theories), but just as an existence condition for *certain* grouping properties, the properties of three-dimensional items; namely, not only the grouping properties of ordinary objects, but also and more relevantly the properties of the three-dimensional items that are seen in a picture.³⁵⁴

On behalf of the syncretistic theory of depiction, the above reflections prompt me to provide the following refinement of the core claim of the syncretistic theory (RSC):

(RSC) an item *P* depicts a subject *O*, where *O* can be either a specific individual or any individual of a certain kind, iff i) one has a certain seeing-in state involving *P* whose configurational fold grasps the grouping properties that *P*, taken from many different external perspectives if three-dimensional, roughly shares with *O*, taken either from an internal perspective or from many different such perspectives, while its recognitional

fold presents a thing of a kind under which *O* falls, and ii) *P* entertains the right causal/intentional relation with *O*.

2. *Actual or Counterfactual Resemblance*

In the previous Section, we have seen that, unlike grouping in 2D, grouping in 3D is sensible to perspectives, whether external (in the case of sculptures, or even of three-dimensional objects without figurative value) or internal (in the case of the three-dimensional things seen in items endowed with figurativity; a fixed internal perspective in the case of the three-dimensional things seen in two-dimensional pictures, many different internal perspectives in the case of the three-dimensional things seen in three-dimensional pictures). Thus on the one hand, in the case of three-dimensional items in general, there is an existential dependence of grouping properties on perspectives. Yet on the other hand, as the phenomenon of perceptual constancy shows, there is no such dependence of the grouping properties of a two-dimensional pictorial vehicle on the external perspectives from which that very vehicle is seen. Hence, the three-dimensional thing seen in that vehicle is indifferent to such external perspectives. Rather, as I said, that thing is always seen in the vehicle from the very same internal perspective.

Now, this overall situation may prompt a question. I have just recalled at the end of the previous Section that a necessary condition of depiction is that there be a similarity between the grouping properties that affect the picture's vehicle and the grouping properties that affect the picture's subject. Yet since the picture's subject is a three-dimensional entity, the grouping properties that affect it are perspective-dependent. Although as I said before this dependence affects the existence but not the identity conditions of such properties, how can there always be a similarity between the grouping properties that affect the picture's vehicle, when this is a two-dimensional entity, and the grouping properties that affect the picture's subject? Given perceptual constancy, one may well say that the grouping properties that affect the picture's vehicle roughly coincide with the grouping properties that affect what is seen in that vehicle, properties that depend on an *internal* perspective. Yet, someone may think, one is not

allowed to say that the grouping properties that affect such a picture's vehicle coincide with the grouping properties that affect the picture's subject, properties that depend on an *external* perspective. These latter grouping properties may well be different from the previous grouping properties, especially when they have yet to be grasped.

In order to vividly illustrate the problem, let us consider the following two cases. First of all, let us take Piero's aforementioned portrait of Federico da Montefeltro. In this picture, the duke is given in profile. The grouping properties that affect what is seen in the picture thus depend on a *certain* internal perspective, the one involving the profile of the seen-in item. Had the duke been depicted frontally, *different* grouping properties would have affected what would have been then seen in the picture, as depending on *another* internal perspective. Let us compare Piero's portrait with the second picture, allegedly of the same duke.



Figure 7.10 Piero della Francesca, *Portrait of the Duke of Urbino*, after 1472; Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence - ARTstor Collection, Italian and other European Art (Scala Archives)

Figure 7.11 The duke, frontally seen (personal reproduction)

Now, in this case one may well surmise that the grouping properties of Piero's original portrait roughly coincide not only with the grouping properties of what is seen in it from an internal perspective, but also with the grouping properties of the picture's subject, i.e., the duke himself, as given from a corresponding external perspective. Whoever met the duke standing in profile roughly grasped the same grouping properties they would grasp by looking at the portrait's vehicle. Yet moreover, let us suppose that Piero also

wanted to depict the other side of the Moon. If he had drawn such a painting, he would have drawn something that depicted the Moon from a perspective that during his lifetime (1412/17 – 1492) of course no human had grasped. Granted, the grouping properties of the painting would have roughly coincided with the grouping properties of the Moon as seen in that painting from a certain internal perspective. Yet clearly, there would have been no guarantee that such properties would have roughly coincided with the grouping properties of *the Moon itself* when seen from the other side, the corresponding external perspective the Apollo 11 astronauts were the first to entertain. Let us further suppose that the two corresponding perspectives on the Moon, the internal and the external ones, were utterly different. In this case, the grouping properties of the Moon when seen in the painting from an internal perspective would have differed from the grouping properties of the Moon when seen face to face from the corresponding external perspective. So how could the grouping properties of Piero's new painting have roughly coincided with the grouping properties of the Moon seen from the dark side? (In point of fact, we definitely have pre-20th Century drawings of the Moon including its other side, such as the very famous Galileian ones.)

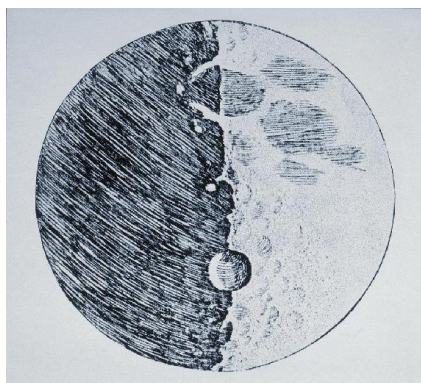


Figure 7.12 Galileo Galilei, *Surface of the Moon*, 1610; ARTstor Collection, ARTstor Slide Gallery

Clearly, the problem may also arise with three-dimensional items endowed with figurative value, hence with sculptures. Yet the problem is less striking in this case, for the grouping properties of the sculpture's vehicle seen from all of its external perspectives do not *always* differ from the grouping properties of the sculpture's subject

seen from all of its external perspectives. For example, there are certainly many such perspectives with respect to which Alexander Calder's sculpture of Fernand Léger and Léger himself resemble in grouping properties.



Figure 7.13 Fernand Léger with a Calder's sculpture representing him (by courtesy of Paola Tosti)

While, in the case of two-dimensional items endowed with figurative value, due to perceptual constancy there are only *certain* grouping properties of what is seen from a certain internal perspective that roughly coincide with the pictorial vehicle's grouping properties. Thus, it may be more likely that such grouping properties do not even roughly coincide with the grouping properties of the picture's subject seen from the corresponding external perspective.

One may try to solve this problem by saying that what matters for figurativity is just *represented resemblance*, not actual resemblance, in grouping properties between the picture's vehicle and the picture's subject (with respect to a certain perspective). In other terms, one may say that the resemblance that is relevant for figurativity is resemblance in grouping properties not between the picture's vehicle and the picture's subject *tout court* (from a certain external perspective), but between the picture's vehicle and the picture's subject *represented as such* (from a certain internal perspective). So, even if the grouping properties of the picture's vehicle differed from the properties of the picture's subject (from a certain external perspective), they would still roughly coincide with the properties of the picture's subject represented as such (from a certain internal perspective). So, to return to our previous example, Piero might

have well painted a picture of the dark side of the Moon even if the grouping properties of that picture's vehicle differed from the grouping properties of the Moon from the relevant external perspective. For the former properties would still roughly coincide with the grouping properties of the Moon *as represented* in that picture from the corresponding internal perspective.

This move is remindful of John Hyman's move against putative counterexamples to his objective resemblance theory of depiction. As we will remember from chap. III, for Hyman a picture's vehicle depicts that picture's subject only insofar as it resembles either in occlusion shape or in aperture color not that very subject, but that subject *qua* represented in the picture – the *internal*, not the external, subject, as Hyman is quite willing to put it.³⁵⁵

To be sure, I have previously said that the grouping properties of a two-dimensional picture's vehicle roughly coincide with the properties of what is seen in that picture from a certain internal perspective. *Mutatis mutandis*, is this not the exact counterpart to Hyman's move, with grouping properties instead of occlusion shape or aperture colors as playing the role of the relevant respect of resemblance?

My answer is negative, for the problem does not in fact arise as it relies on an ungrounded assumption. The assumption is this: the grouping properties of what is seen in a picture from an internal perspective may differ from the grouping properties of the picture's subject from the corresponding external perspective. Yet this is simply not the case. As I have repeatedly said, what is seen in a picture is the picture's figurative content. This content is more generic than the picture's subject, the picture's pictorial content, which amounts to the picture's subject. Yet the latter is simply selected from the former. In this respect, matters of perspective add nothing to the whole account. If you like, the picture's subject from an external perspective is simply the picture's figurative content from the corresponding internal perspective, minus the other candidates for such a subject that are compatible with the latter content yet have not been either negotiated or causally relevant in order to be that subject. As a result, it cannot be the case that the grouping properties of the picture's subject from a certain external perspective differ from the grouping properties of what is seen in that picture

from the corresponding internal perspective. For if this were the case, then the picture could not have that subject as its pictorial subject.

Let us consider Piero's fresco of St. Louis of Toulouse once again. As I have stated, in it one sees a man of a certain kind; a man of a certain kind from an internal frontal perspective, as I can now add. Its subject is St. Louis; yet, if certain though extravagant conditions had occurred, the picture would have been about Michael Schumacher. Now on the one hand, in order for that *picture* to be either about St. Louis or about Schumacher, these individuals must be such that they have to be compatible with what is seen in the picture. This now means that, when seen from a certain external frontal perspective, these individuals must be such that they actually have roughly the same grouping properties as the grouping properties that what is seen in the picture – namely, a certain kind of man – has from the corresponding internal perspective. Yet on the other hand, this *picture* could not become a picture of, say, Paul the octopus, the mollusk that came to worldwide attention due to his accurate predictions in the 2010 World Cup. For the mollusk's actual grouping properties from an external frontal perspective clearly differ from the grouping properties that what is seen in Piero's fresco has from the corresponding yet internal perspective.

If this is the case, then Piero might have depicted the dark side of the Moon, provided that in such a hypothetical painting one had seen a roughly spherical body from a certain internal perspective. For even if at the time in which that painting had been painted the Moon had yet to be seen from the dark side, it was still true at that time that, if one had seen the Moon in that way, one would have seen a roughly spherical body from that external perspective, hence a three-dimensional item whose grouping properties from that perspective resembled the grouping properties of what would have been seen in that hypothetical painting from the corresponding internal perspective. Yet if in that hypothetical painting one had instead seen an octopus from a certain internal perspective, that painting could not have been a picture of the dark side of the Moon. For it was true even at that time that, if one had seen the Moon in that way, one would have seen a three-dimensional item whose grouping properties from that external perspective would not have resembled the grouping properties of what would have been

seen in that painting from the corresponding internal perspective, i.e., a mollusk-like item.³⁵⁶

All in all, therefore, if the similarity relevant for figurativity is the similarity between the grouping properties of the picture's vehicle, from many different perspectives if three-dimensional, and those of the item seen in it, from just one internal perspective if the vehicle is two-dimensional or many different such perspectives if it is three-dimensional, then the similarity relevant for depiction is the similarity between the grouping properties of the picture's vehicle, from many different perspectives if three-dimensional, and the very same grouping properties of the picture's subject, from just one external perspective if the vehicle is two-dimensional or many different such perspectives if it is three-dimensional. For the picture's subject is just a selection of what is seen in the picture, namely, the picture's figurative content.

This is a very important outcome, for it has a very interesting consequence. As we saw in chap. III, it is debatable whether there are pictures of entities that do not exist. This problem is particularly relevant if we were to defend an objective resemblance theory of depiction. For, as Goodman remarked, it is hard to see how a picture can resemble its subject if this subject does not exist. Yet I commented then on Goodman's remark that such a resemblance may still hold if the respect of resemblance involves properties that a picture's subject possesses even if it does not exist. As I already said, this may well hold of fictional entities, provided that not only the general inventory of what there is includes them as a sort of non-existent entities, but that there is also a sense according to which they possess the properties that are predicated of them in the relevant stories. For the respect of resemblance intuitively falls within such properties.³⁵⁷ There is, therefore, a chance for the syncretist to allow for pictures of fictional non-existents. Yet what about merely possible entities, i.e., entities that do not actually exist although they might have existed? Let us consider our old friend Elip, the merely possible offspring of a certain egg of Elizabeth I of England and Philip II of Spain. Of course, Elip never actually existed, but he might have existed. Now if there are such things, they actually possess quite a few and rather uninteresting properties, such as *being self-identical* and *being non-existent*. Yet they actually possess none of

the properties intuitively including the relevant respect of resemblance, not to mention impossible entities, entities that neither actually nor merely possibly exist such as Twardy, the impossible wooden cannon made of steel. How might such non-existent things be depicted for a syncretist?

Armed with the above reflections, the syncretist is able to provide a systematic answer to the above problem. To begin, things are simple with regards to fictional entities. A picture of Holmes is such that a man of a certain kind is seen in it from a certain internal perspective. Thus, the picture's vehicle roughly shares its grouping properties with that generic man seen in it from that perspective. Moreover, such properties are also roughly the same as the grouping properties from the corresponding external perspective the spatiotemporally non-existent Holmes (in some sense) has insofar as he has (in some sense) the property of *being a man of a certain kind*.³⁵⁸ If Holmes had different grouping properties, he could not be that picture's subject. Moreover, there are no generic pictures of fictional entities. For (unlike corresponding verbal descriptions), pictures of fictional entities are always singular pictures of such entities.³⁵⁹ Thus, a picture of, say, a unicorn taken as a fictional entity, hence as a spatiotemporally non-existent being, works for the syncretist pretty much the same way as a picture of Holmes. That is to say, in a picture of a unicorn we instead see something like a one-horned horse from a certain internal perspective. Thus, the picture's vehicle roughly shares its grouping properties with that generic animal seen in it from that perspective. Moreover, such properties are also the grouping properties from the corresponding external perspective one such spatiotemporally non-existent unicorn has (in some sense) insofar as it has (in some sense) the property of being *something like a one-horned horse*. If a unicorn had different grouping properties, it could not be that picture's subject.

Mutatis mutandis, for the syncretist things are quite similar when it comes to merely possible entities. A picture of Elip is such that a male human is seen in it from a certain internal perspective. Thus, the picture's vehicle roughly shares its grouping properties with that generic male human seen in it from that perspective. Now clearly, insofar as he does not actually exist, unlike Holmes Elip has no grouping property

whatsoever from any external perspective. Yet had he existed, he would have been a male human; thus, he would have roughly had such grouping properties from the corresponding external perspective. For if he had had different grouping properties from that perspective, he could not be that picture's subject. In other terms, he can compete with any actual male human in order to be that picture's subject insofar as he is possibly a male human, hence he has possibly (roughly) the above grouping properties. So, although the picture's vehicle does not roughly share its grouping properties with Elip, it would have roughly shared them with him from a certain external perspective if he had existed. *Mutatis mutandis*, the same would hold as to a generic picture of some merely possible *F* or other. If it existed, any such possible *F* would roughly share the same grouping properties from an external perspective that the generic thing (under which actual *F*s fall) seen in that picture has from the corresponding internal perspective, while these properties resemble the grouping properties of that picture's vehicle. All in all, therefore, for merely possible entities resemblance in grouping properties between the picture's vehicle and the picture's subject with respect to a certain perspective simply becomes *counterfactual* resemblance.³⁶⁰

What about impossible entities? Now things get complicated. First of all, since impossible entities do not actually, nor do they possibly, exist, they do not even possibly have grouping properties (from external perspectives). Thus, insofar as a syncretist appeals to counterfactual resemblance in grouping properties, in order to allow for pictures of *impossibilia* she should appeal to *highly counterfactual* resemblance, that is, a resemblance holding between the picture's vehicle and the picture's subject in impossible worlds. This is hard to swallow. But there is a further problem. Can there be a picture in which one sees *something impossible*, namely an impossible figurative content with which that impossible subject is compatible? This seems even harder to swallow. I will return on this problem in the next chapter. Pending this clarification, I propose the following sophistication of the syncretistic claim about depiction (SSC):

(SSC) an item *P* depicts a subject *O*, where *O* can be either a specific individual, (possibly) existent or spatiotemporally non-existent, or any individual, (possibly)

existent of a certain (possible) kind, iff i) one has a certain seeing-in state involving P whose configurational fold grasps the grouping properties P , taken from many different external perspectives if three dimensional, roughly either shares or may share with O , taken either from a certain external perspective or from many different such perspectives, while its recognitional fold presents a thing of a kind under which O falls, and ii) P entertains the right causal/intentional relation with O .

3. *Pictures in Other Sensory Modalities*

Up until this point, by attempting to assess what depiction consists in, I have only considered cases of *visual* pictures, namely cases of pictures whose figurative value involves a mental state in a *visual* modality: a (suitably reconceived) state of *seeing-in*. Yet one may justifiably wonder whether there are other entities that are endowed with a figurative value that involves a mental state belonging to a different sensory modality. In a nutshell, if seeing-in is necessary for figurativity, can there be states of *touching-in*, *hearing-in* etc. that play the same role?

Prima facie, the answer to this question seems to be affirmative. Empirical research seems to show that there are something like *tactile pictures*, raised-line drawings that allow congenitally blind people to tactilely discern something three-dimensional in them. This is testified by the fact that such people are able to exhibit their allegedly pictorial competence with such drawings when they themselves create further drawings in which normally sighted people can see three-dimensional scenes in which something stands in front of something else,³⁶¹ as in this case of a drawing by a blind person, featuring a hand whose thumb stands in front of the other fingers.



Figure 7.14 A drawing by a blind person (by courtesy of Lea Ferro)

Some philosophers, e.g. Dom Lopes, have accepted these data, by claiming that there really are tactile pictures involving roughly the same recognitional capacities of identifying their subjects that visual pictures involve.³⁶² Yet other philosophers, e.g. Rob Hopkins, have been more skeptical on this issue, by saying that if we stick to our ordinary notion of a picture, tactile pictures do not really count as pictures.³⁶³

The controversy between tactilists and anti-tactilists revolves around whether we can truly ascribe a perspectival import to touch. A visual picture, says Hopkins, is seen from a point of view from which one can draw a certain outline shape to the picture's contours. Yet *pace* Lopes, for Hopkins nothing similar takes place with respect to objects, putative pictures included, insofar as they are touched. For, he says, since touch is a sensory modality that puts one in contact with the object touched, there is no way of singling out a 'point of touch' from which one can draw an outline shape to that object's contours. Touch has as many 'points' that regard the object touched as the bodily parts of the toucher that are in contact with the corresponding parts of the object touched. Thus, none of those 'points' can legitimately aspire to be a 'point of touch' from which such an object is given.³⁶⁴

How can the syncretist approach this, admittedly complicated, matter? First of all, as to visual two-dimensional pictures, the syncretist has already maintained that the grouping properties of a picture's vehicle do not depend on external perspectives. As we may recall, in such cases one can group the pictorial vehicle's elements in the very same

way independently of how one moves around such a vehicle, hence independently of the external perspectives from which one sees it, i.e., of the outline shapes one draws to that vehicle's contours. In order for that vehicle to depict something, its grouping must simply be roughly similar to the grouping concerning the thing seen in it from a certain internal perspective. Theoretically speaking, therefore, if by touching a two-dimensional vehicle one grasps certain grouping properties of it, it is possible for such a vehicle to have a figurative value, hence to become a tactile picture. For if one so grasps such grouping properties of that vehicle, one is therefore also able to tactilely detect something in it that possesses roughly the same grouping properties from an internal perspective.

Once again, empirical research seems to show that this is the case. We can indeed assimilate raised-line drawings to two-dimensional pictures, as I have already done with respect to low reliefs. When touched, such drawings clearly allow grouping operations, not only in the first two-dimensions but also in the third one. As a matter of fact, congenitally blind people are able to grasp figure-ground segmentations in such drawings, for they grasp occlusions and overlaps in them.³⁶⁵ Therefore, such people are able to touch items *in* such drawings, insofar as in virtue of grasping the grouping properties of the drawings' vehicles, they also grasp the roughly identical grouping properties of such items from a certain internal perspective.³⁶⁶

Even Hopkins does not deny that there may be something like touching-in.³⁶⁷ Yet, Hopkins may retort, as far as touch is concerned the real problem arises not with two-dimensional objects endowed with figurative value. As we have seen, he acknowledges that in such cases external perspectives may be irrelevant insofar as they do not match the fixed internal perspective of the things perceived in those objects. Rather, the real problem arises with three-dimensional objects allegedly endowed with figurative value, i.e., items that may count as sculptures or similar representations. As we have seen, as far as sculptures *qua* visual objects are concerned, the syncretist has already acknowledged that there are many different external perspectives from which sculptures are seen in such a way that the grouping properties of those sculptures depend on them. Moreover, such grouping properties resemble the grouping properties

of the things seen in them, as dependent on the many different corresponding internal perspectives from which those items are seen. Yet according to Hopkins *qua* tactile objects sculptures are touched from no external perspective. For, he claims, touch displays no such perspective. A fortiori, since there is no such perspective, with regards to such objects, there is no internal perspective that can match those external perspectives, either. Thus, how can these be pictures,³⁶⁸ or if you like, pictures in the same sense as sculptures *qua* visual objects, once we have allowed (*pace* Hopkins) for the latter things to be pictures?

Yet is it really the case that objects are not given to us tactilely from an external perspective? If this were the case, then there would be no Frege-like problem involving three-dimensional entities *qua* touched entities. Clearly enough, in the classical examples originally provided by Frege, the problem linked to the so-called cognitive value of the true identity sentences of the “a is b”- form, where “a” and “b” are singular co-referential terms, arises because, as we saw earlier, people do not recognize that an object given from a certain *visual* external perspective (and that they refer to by means of a certain singular term) – the alleged celestial body Hesperus, the alleged mountain Aphla – is the same as the object given from another visual external perspective (and that they refer to by means of another singular term) – the alleged celestial body Phosphorus, the alleged mountain Ateb.³⁶⁹ Yet it is hard to see why such a problem could not also arise when tactilely given objects are involved. When groping around in the dark at night, it may take time for me to recognize that the thing I touch one way is the same as the thing I touch another way. As I would quite naturally tend to say, I may fail to recognize that the thing tactilely given to me in profile is the same as the thing tactilely given to me frontally. I first touch a face that is given to me frontally; then I touch what happens to be the same face that is given to me in profile, while failing to recognize that it is the same face given to me twice. It would be hard not to say, then, that those ways of givenness amount to external perspectives! But if this is the case, then three-dimensional objects are also tactilely given from many different external perspectives.³⁷⁰ Thus, there seems to be no principled reason preventing such objects from acquiring a figurative value insofar as they resemble in the grouping properties

grasped from such external perspectives touched-in items given from many different corresponding internal perspectives.

To be sure, to select a particular ‘point of touch’ from which we tactilely grasp an object would certainly sound arbitrary. Given that touch puts us in contact with the thing that is touched, why should a certain fingertip be preferred to, say, the whole palm of a hand in order to single out a point of origin for that sensation?³⁷¹

It should be noted, however, that, even when it comes to vision, at least in the case of binocular vision, the point of view from which a visual perception of something originates coincides with no physical point on the perceiver’s body. Rather, it coincides with what is often called the *geometrical eye*, to be identified with the locus equidistant from the two physical eyes of the perceiver. Thus, something similar may be posited as far as touch is concerned. If touch puts a certain surface of someone’s body in contact with the thing that is touched, the point of touch of that sensation may be individuated in a locus behind that surface that corresponds to a given point of that surface, its centre. As a result, different external perspectives on the thing that is touched will be given from different such loci. Moreover, these different loci must be postulated, if we wish to explain why something that is tactilely given in one way may not be recognized as the same thing tactilely given in another way. As a further result, we now have at our disposal the many different external perspectives from which a three-dimensional object can be touched that moreover match the many different internal perspectives of an item that is touched *in* that very object. Finally, therefore, nothing prevents us any longer from having tactile three-dimensional pictures, i.e., tactile sculptures.

At this point, an interesting question arises. Up to now, I have spoken both of two-dimensional pictures and of three-dimensional pictures *either* as visual pictures *or* as tactile pictures. Yet cannot one and the same picture be *both* visual *and* tactile?

Once I have stated that groupings work in the same way both in the visual and in the tactile cases, by respectively being both non-dependent on external perspectives when two-dimensional pictorial vehicles are at stake and dependent on such perspectives when three-dimensional pictorial vehicles are at stake, there is reason to answer that question affirmatively.

Once again, the cases of perceptual ambiguity are illuminating in this respect. As far as two-dimensional perceptually ambiguous items are concerned, empirical research has already shown that different groupings of one and the same item in the first two dimensions work in the same way both in the visual and in the tactile cases.³⁷² Thus, we can also expect that when three-dimensional items that are perceptually ambiguous just along the first two dimensions are at stake, their ambiguity is tactilely as well as visually recognized by apprehending that the very same kinds of different groupings (from many different external perspectives) are involved. Finally, it may be more difficult for the perceptual ambiguity involving the third dimension for essentially two-dimensional items, whereby they acquire a figurative value (i.e., the ambiguity concerning the figure-ground segmentation of such items), to be recognized merely tactilely. Yet it is principledly possible for it to exist in the tactual as well as in the visual modality, again in virtue of the very same kinds of different groupings.³⁷³ As a result, both two-dimensional and three-dimensional pictures can be perceptually ambiguous in the same way, i.e., according to the very same kinds of different groupings, both in the visual and in the tactile modality.³⁷⁴ Put alternatively, in both the visual and the tactile cases one grasps the very same different figurative values of the relevant perceptually ambiguous picture by grasping exactly the same different grouping properties in the picture's vehicle (from many different external perspectives). Such properties are respectively similar to the grouping properties of the things one perceives in them from the corresponding internal perspectives.³⁷⁵

Armed with the above reflections, the syncretist now knows, at least in theory, how her account should be developed in order to deal with the issue of pictures in further sensory modalities. For instance, it is tempting to allow for auditory pictures as well, or at least for sounds having a figurative value. For we quite naturally discern certain sounds *in* other sounds – for instance, birdsongs in the sounds produced by some musical instruments.³⁷⁶ Moreover, it is quite likely that this hearing-in is linked to auditorily grasping certain grouping properties in the sounds that we directly hear, in the sense that the hearing-in, if there is such a thing, presupposes our grasping of such properties. Indeed on the one hand, grouping properties entered the philosophical debate

when Christian von Ehrenfels considered the auditory cases of melodies that are constituted by grouping certain arrays of notes in certain ways.³⁷⁷ Moreover on the other hand, there are also auditorily ambiguous configurations of sounds, insofar as one may hear such sounds in different ways by differently grouping them.³⁷⁸ Thus, we might expect for similar grouping operations on sounds to be involved in order for certain complex contents to emerge in genuine *hearing-in* experiences of such sounds. If there is such a thing, hearing-in amounts to one's hearing, in a certain auditory item, another auditory item in virtue of opportunely grouping the first item's elements; so that, although the second item seems to be there, it is not there, for what is veridically heard to be there is simply the first auditory item.

Now, in the present context I do not wish to prove whether there really is a thing as hearing-in. Yet I can already say that such a hearing-in would provide an auditory vehicle with the very same kind of figurative value that visual and tactile pictures possess just in case that vehicle could be regarded as an item whose grouping properties are either perspective-independent (as is the case with two-dimensional visual or tactile pictures) or perspective-dependent (as is the case with three-dimensional visual or tactile pictures). As I said before, however, for grouping properties dependence on perspectives is just a condition of existence, not a condition of identity. Thus, there is a great chance that even if the grouping properties of an auditory vehicle were to turn out to be perspective-indifferent, auditory pictures would be pictures in the same sense as visual and tactile pictures are. *Mutatis mutandis*, the same also holds true of putative pictures in the extant sensory modalities, i.e., olfactive and gustative pictures; or more properly, the same also holds true of olfactory and gustative items putatively endowed with a figurative value, that is, open to smelling-in and tasting-in.³⁷⁹

All in all, by allowing at least for tactile pictures, over and above visual pictures, we are able to reach the final supersophistication of the syncretistic claim about depiction (SSSC), a supersophistication involving *perceiving-in* as the common genus seeing-in and at least touching-in share:

(SSSC) an item P depicts a subject O , where O can be either a specific individual, (possibly) existent or spatiotemporally non-existent, or any individual, (possibly) existent of a certain (possible) kind, iff i) one has a certain perceiving-in state involving P whose configurational fold grasps the grouping properties P , taken from many different external perspectives if three-dimensional, roughly either shares or may share with O , taken either from a certain external perspective or from many different such perspectives, while its recognitional fold presents a thing of a kind under which O falls, and ii) P entertains the right causal/intentional relation with O .

Chapter VIII

Defending the Syncretistic Theory

1. Is the Syncretistic Theory Correct?

I have ended the previous chapter by providing the final formulation of the syncretistic theory as recapped by (SSSC). Roughly speaking, the theory first provides two necessary and jointly sufficient conditions of figurativity: perceiving-in and similarity in grouping properties between the picture's vehicle and what is perceived in it (with respect to the relevant perspective(s)). Second, once they are put together, these conditions turn out to be one necessary condition of depiction that, along with another necessary condition (concerning the intentionality of a picture), provides the two jointly sufficient conditions of depiction. A picture depicts something iff that very something not only is perceived in it and roughly shares the same grouping properties with it (with respect to the relevant perspective(s)), but also stands in the right causal/intentional relation with it. Put in this way, the syncretistic account turns out to be, as I have repeatedly said, a *loosely minimalist* approach to depiction, according to which the representational content of a picture – its subject – is a *pictorial* content, i.e., a content that is selected from its figurative content – what is perceived in it.

At this point, one may wonder whether the theory formulated in this way is correct. Granted, if the two conditions – perceiving-in and similarity in grouping properties – are both necessary and jointly sufficient conditions of figurativity, they are *eo ipso* necessary conditions of depiction. Yet to begin with, one may doubt whether the two conditions of figurativity are really necessary conditions of it. Moreover, one may doubt whether they are sufficient conditions of figurativity once they are put together. To be sure, one might further doubt not only whether the further condition of depiction, the one providing the picture's intentionality, is also necessary, but also whether such conditions yield jointly sufficient conditions of depiction when they are all taken into consideration. Yet clearly enough for the syncretist it is more opportune to focus the further discussion on the first two doubts, which raise serious problems for syncretism.

For the idea that a mixture of convention and causation will assess which is the very picture's subject among a list of suitable candidates, may sound less controversial and may even be shareable by different theorists, in accordance with what I have already said on this matter in chaps. I, II and VI.

To begin with, by evaluating the corresponding issue regarding seeing-in, we have already seen how the syncretist may defend the claim that perceiving-in is necessary for figurativity. To recapitulate, on the one hand some items that are putatively endowed with figurative value even if they are not affected by perceived-in have actually no such value. Genuine *trompe-l'oeils* are surely not surrounded by a perceiving-in state, yet they are just like items that are merely mistaken for something else, like a cow that is mistaken for a horse on a dark night. Definitely, in being so mistaken such a cow acquires no figurative value; *mutatis mutandis*, the same holds true of a genuine *trompe-l'oeil*. On the other hand, further items that are putatively endowed with figurative value actually have such a value, for *pace* contrary opinions they *are* affected by perceiving-in. Indeed, unlike *trompe-l'oeils*, naturalistic pictures as well as holograms and similar images do have a figurative value. Yet appearances notwithstanding, they are surrounded by a perceiving-in state. To deny this claim would depend on erroneously conflating phenomenal awareness of the relevant pictorial vehicle with attending to its colors and shapes, namely with attending to the ordinary design properties of its vehicle. No such attention is required; in Wollheim's terms, the perceiving-in state that affects them just displays *weak* twofoldness, at least with respect to such properties.

Yet attention is required, so *strong* twofoldness is involved by the relevant perceiving-in state, as far as *other* design properties not only of the vehicle of the above pictures, but of *any* pictorial vehicle, are concerned: namely, the grouping properties of such a vehicle. For attention singles out such mind-dependent properties that constitute the respect of similarity between the picture's vehicle and what is perceived in it (with respect to the relevant perspective(s)). Now, this similarity yields the other necessary condition of figurativity, as I will immediately argue. Indeed, if this similarity were not required, the perceiving-in state could be utterly disconnected from the picture's

vehicle. Thus, there might well be hallucinatory pictures, or better yet, things that would have a figurative value simply in virtue of the fact that, in perceiving such a thing, one would hallucinate an utterly different individual. Yet nothing has something as its figurative value just because when perceived it promotes the hallucination of this other something. Again, a cow is no picture of a horse not only when it is merely mistaken for a horse, but also when one hallucinates a horse once it is perceived. Rather, something has something else as its figurative value only if the former shares with the latter certain grouping properties (with respect to the relevant perspective(s)).

In arguing for the necessity of similarity in grouping properties for figurativity, the above reasoning also shows that perceiving-in by itself is not sufficient for it. Yet not even similarity in grouping properties (with respect to the relevant perspective(s)) is by itself sufficient. Two things may be similar in grouping properties yet this similarity does not make any of them possess a figurative value. This not only holds true of merely two-dimensional items, such as merely two-dimensional figures – two arrays of dots may be similarly grouped yet a perceiver does not discern one in the other – but also of three-dimensional items, as in the prototypical case of two twins. Yet perceiving-in along with similarity in groupings (with respect to the relevant perspective(s)) jointly provide sufficient conditions for figurativity. In attending to the grouping properties a cow shares with something else (with respect to the relevant perspective(s)), one can perceive that something else in a cow, so that such a cow acquires a certain figurative value. Or so I claim.

In point of fact, it is hard to find a counterexample to these conditions as to their being jointly sufficient conditions of figurativity. If two things are such that by attending to the first thing, notably by attending to its grouping properties, one perceives the other thing in it, then the first thing has a figurative value that involves the second thing as constituting the first thing's figurative content.

At first blush, one might find this implausible. When one notices family resemblances, one may well say that one sees one's grandfather in an individual but not one's father precisely because that individual is similar to the former but not to the latter in grouping properties (with respect to many different perspectives). Yet, one may be

tempted to go on to say that seeing one's grandfather in such an individual certainly does not make that individual possess a figurative value.

Quite to the contrary, as I said in chap. VI, I believe that such an individual does thereby possess this figurative value. Since as we have seen there are accidental images, this individual is simply another case of an accidental image, i.e., an image of that kind that possesses a 'grandfatherish' figurative value. Clearly, that individual is not a picture of his grandfather. Yet this does not prevent him from having such a figurative value. It simply means that no one has hitherto treated him as a representation of his grandfather. If he were to play such a role in theatre, since he already has that figurative value, he would then become a picture of his grandfather. All in all, therefore, appearances notwithstanding the putative counterexample to the syncretist's jointly sufficient conditions of figurativity is not a real counterexample.

2. *The Adequacy Conditions*

Clearly, even if the syncretist can cope with the previous case, it is difficult for her to foresee any possible counterexample. Other cases may pop up that could lead the syncretist to reconsider matters. Yet one may question whether the proper way to assess a theory is to check how it deals with any possible counterexample to its claims. Rather, one may hold that a theory needs careful consideration if it provides a new insight as to the phenomena it wishes to cover. In order for a theory to do so, it must satisfy a series of requirements that fix the minimal explananda that a theory about a certain subject matter must account for in order to be a good theory on that subject.

On various occasions,³⁸⁰ Rob Hopkins has provided the following six adequacy conditions as the desiderata that any good theory of depiction must comply with:

- (x1) Any depicted particular is depicted as having some properties, and any properties depicted are reasonably determinate.
- (x2) Everything depicted is depicted from some point(s) of view.
- (x3) Whatever can be depicted could be seen.

(x4) Pictorial misrepresentation is possible, but has its limits.

(x5) General competence with depiction and knowledge of the appearance of *O* (be it a particular *a* or merely some *F*- thing) suffice for the ability to understand depiction of *O*.

(x6) General competence with depiction and knowledge of the appearance of *O* are necessary for the ability to understand depiction of *O*.

In what follows, I will try to show that syncretism can deal with all such desiderata. Let me start with (x1). This is a requisite concerning the richness of pictorial, hence figurative, content: unlike a verbal representation, a pictorial representation specifies what it represents as detailed as possible. One might interpret this requirement as stating that, unlike a verbal representation, a picture is an analogical representation, for in its distributing itself along a continuum analogue content is taken to be richer than a digital content. Yet as we have seen in chap. II, we have allowed for digital pictures. So, it is best not to mean for this desideratum to require that a pictorial representation have an analogue content. Moreover, since being an analogue content is a sufficient condition for being non-conceptual, there is no reason to even say that what is required is that a pictorial representation have a non-conceptual content.³⁸¹ In point of fact, there is no need for a pictorial representation to have one such content in order to satisfy the *desideratum* in question. A pictorial representation may well have a conceptual content, as for the syncretist at least its figurative content is, and still comply with (x1). For what this desideratum requires is rather that a pictorial representation present a worldly scene, while a verbal representation may well fail to present one such scene (in its most extreme case, a verbal representation – e.g., a proper name – may limit itself to be about a particular individual without predicating anything of it). This is why an informal, though perhaps imprecise, way of expressing this desideratum is to say that pictures paint a thousand words, while a more refined way of expressing it states that there is a significant minimum pictorial content.³⁸²

Now, once this desideratum is meant in this way, syncretism is able to comply with it. For first, by holding that a picture's figurative content is the same as the content

of the recognitional fold of its accompanying perceiving-in state, syncretism maintains that such a content Hence, it exhibits for the picture, amounts to presenting a worldly, though non-present scene; that is, an (admittedly partial) way for the world to unfold itself. Second, since the representational content of a picture is a selection from its figurative content, it is at least as articulated as the latter content. So, if the former content mobilizes a worldly scene, so does the latter.

Let us go back to Piero's fresco once again. By saying that in it, one sees a man of a certain kind, I have meant all along that such a man is seen as standing in a certain position with respect to a certain background. Thus, the recognitional fold of that seeing-in state amounts to seeing that fresco as a man of a certain kind standing in that position with respect to such a background; in a nutshell, it amounts to seeing that fresco as a whole, though non-present, state of affairs. Once we take that picture as a picture of St. Louis, it follows that such a picture is a picture to the effect that St. Louis dressed in a certain way stands in a certain position with respect to a certain background. Its pictorial content is thus more specific than its figurative content, yet no less articulated than the latter content. Nothing changes substantially in the case of a stick figure of a human being. Certainly, its figurative content is more generic than the figurative content of Piero's fresco, and so is its pictorial content with respect to the pictorial content of such a fresco. Yet in their admitted genericity, these two contents of the stick figure are still articulated in such a way that they still display worldly (though non-present) scenes.

Let me move on to (x2). Here things are even easier for the syncretist. As I said in the previous chapter, for the syncretist the figurative content of a picture, a fortiori its pictorial content, yields a non-present scene whose elements are grouped from a certain internal perspective (if the picture is two-dimensional) or from many different such perspectives (if the picture is three-dimensional). Accordingly, in its being a selection from the figurative content, the pictorial content of a picture yields a scene whose elements are grouped from a certain external perspective (if the picture is two-dimensional) or from many different such perspectives (if the picture is three-

dimensional). Thus, syncretism conforms very well to the idea that (x2) displays that pictures are perspectival.

In its turn, (x4) is as easy for the syncretist to comply with as (x2) is. True enough, in their being articulated pictures may well represent things as they do not actually unfold; not because such scenes actually unfold somewhere else, they are merely actually non-present, as is the case with many transparent pictures, but because they actually unfold nowhere, they unfold merely possibly, as is the case with many opaque pictures. So, in their having a pictorial content pictures may well be misrepresentations of their subjects. Yet there is a limit to what they can misrepresent. For according to syncretism they must roughly share with their subjects their grouping properties (with respect to the relevant perspective(s)). Thus, the subject a picture represents has to be constrained by those grouping properties as being a subject *of a certain kind*, namely the kind of thing that has such grouping properties. By means of a picture, one may misrepresent that subject as being many things it actually is not. Yet the picture must still correctly represent it as being a subject of the kind it actually is.³⁸³

Caricatures illustrate this point very clearly. Let us go back to the series of pictures of which at least some are caricatures of Louis-Philippe of Orleans. The third picture of the series, which is a perceptually ambiguous picture, in conformity with one of its perceptual readings, is still a picture of (an admittedly pearish) Louis-Philippe, though rather pear-like (in conformity with its other perceptual reading, it is the picture of an animated pear). In this respect, it is clearly an (ironic) misrepresentation of the French king. Yet it can be such only insofar as it is still the true picture of the French king as a human being. For this is what the grouping properties that the picture (in such a perceptual reading) roughly shares with such a subject (with respect to a certain perspective) force that subject to be. On the contrary, in its merely being a picture of a somehow animated pear, the fourth picture of the series is not a thorough misrepresentation of the French king. Indeed, it cannot be the picture of a human being, for the grouping properties it roughly shares with its subject (with respect to a certain perspective) force that subject to be a (albeit animated) kind of fruit, by ruling out (*inter alia*) that subject as being a human being.

Some people believe that a theory that allows for objective resemblance (in a certain respect) between a picture's vehicle and a picture's subject cannot allow for pictorial misrepresentation. Yet such a belief only depends on the further assumption such people entertain that a supporter of resemblance in depictive matters employs resemblance in order to define *accurate* depiction, which admittedly leaves no room for misrepresentation.³⁸⁴

For the syncretist, this further assumption is incorrect. True enough, a syncretist relies on resemblance as a necessary condition of depiction. Yet first of all, her aim is to give an account of depiction *per se*, not of *accurate* depiction. Matters of accuracy depend so to speak on the world, not on the (pictorial) device used to represent it. Moreover, as we have seen, for the syncretist resemblance comes into play regarding depictive matters not as far as the representative character of a pictorial representation is concerned, but only insofar as one must account for the *figurativity* of such a representation. So, the syncretist may well leave room for pictorial misrepresentation. Her appeal to resemblance only serves to show that, as (x4) predicts, such a misrepresentation cannot be an *overall* misrepresentation. Even an inaccurate picture must share something with its subject in order to (mis)depict it.

Let me go on to consider the last two desiderata, (x5) and (x6). Certainly, the syncretist is able to account for (x6) without a problem. First of all, as we know, the syncretist may well accept that knowing the appearance of a certain subject is necessary for understanding a picture about it. For one may acquire such knowledge in various ways, not only by seeing that subject face to face, but also by entertaining a certain perceiving-in state with respect to that picture. For entertaining such a state entails entertaining its recognitional fold, the knowingly illusory perception of that picture as a thing of a certain kind. As such, this perception may be qualified as a species of the more general kind of perception as of that thing. Hence, it exhibits its perceiver's knowledge of the appearance of such a thing. Since that picture's subject is selected from that thing, which constitutes that picture's figurative content, such knowledge is also knowledge of the appearance of the picture's subject. To be sure, one can entertain such a perceiving-in state only insofar as one is able to entertain perceiving-in states in

general. But such a general capacity is precisely what provides one with a general competence with regard to depictions. Thus, even for the syncretist knowledge of the appearance of a certain picture's subject, along with general competence with regard to depictions, is necessary for understanding that very picture.

Once again, let us consider Piero's painting of St. Louis. In order to understand it, we first have to be able to understand pictures in general. For the syncretist, we have such a general mastery insofar as we are able to entertain perceiving-in states in general. Moreover, we have to know the bishop's appearance. Now, we may know his appearance in various ways. One such way relies on knowing the appearance of men of a certain kind in general, as we may turn out to know by entertaining the recognitional fold of a perceiving-in state with respect to that painting. For since that fold is a perception as of a man of a certain kind, we thereby know the appearances of such men. Since the bishop is one such man, we thereby know his appearance.

Granted, we normally become acquainted with human male appearances by facing men. Yet we may also know such appearances by facing pictures of men. This possibility makes the idea of sending spacecrafts far out into space with pictures of humans impressed on them, as in the case of the plaques on Pioneer 10 and 11, a sensible one. For we assume that, this way, aliens will be able to recognize humans.

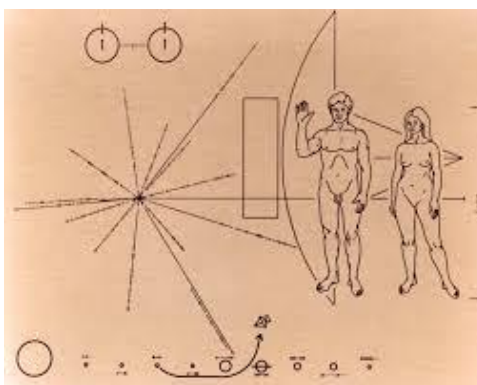


Figure 8.1 Plaque on Pioneer 10, <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pioneer10-plaque.jpg>

Once the syncretist accounts for (x6) in this way, she can clearly account for (x5) as well. First, as we have just seen, entertaining a certain recognitional fold of a

perceiving-in state is one of the ways of knowing a certain subject's appearance. Second, we cannot entertain such a fold, hence a perceiving-in state as a whole, if we do not have a general capacity of entertaining perceiving-in states, hence a general competence with depictions. As Flint Schier originally underlined, unlike linguistic competence this competence is generative: if we understand the figurative value of a picture (by having what for the syncretist is an appropriate perceiving-in state), then we can understand the figurative value of many different other pictures.³⁸⁵ Thus, knowing a subject's appearance and having this general competence jointly suffice for understanding the depiction of that very subject.

Let us go back this time to Piero's hypothetical painting of the dark side of the Moon. Not only Piero himself, but also his audience at the time, would have easily understood such a painting. For to begin with, such people were able to recognize the Moon's appearance from the other side insofar as they were able to recognize the appearance of a spherical body, as it might have been given to them in any experience as of such a body, including the recognitional fold of the perceiving-in state they would have entertained when facing Piero's painting. Moreover, it is clear that they might have entertained such a perceiving-in state only insofar as they were already able to entertain perceiving-in states in general, so as to have a generic competence with respect to depictions.

At this point, only (x3) remains to be evaluated. Clearly, as I already said in chap. VI, the syncretist is a kind of perceptualist. Therefore, she definitely endorses (x3). As we have seen, for the syncretist a necessary condition of figurativity, hence of depiction, is that the picture's vehicle and the picture's subject roughly share the same grouping properties (with respect to the relevant perspective(s)). Now, in order for a picture's subject to possess grouping properties, which depend on one's attention on the one hand and (in the case of three-dimensional items, as pictorial subjects are) on perspectives on the other hand, that subject must be something that could be seen.³⁸⁶ Therefore, this desideratum too is satisfied by the syncretistic theory. All in all, therefore, since it satisfies all the requirements that a theory has to comply with in order to be a good theory of depiction, syncretism at least really deserves consideration.

3. *Impossible Pictures?*

At this point, a reader may express a natural curiosity: why was the analysis of (x3) left to the end of the previous Section? The answer is simple. If a theory of depiction satisfies this requirement, then there are things that are putatively ranked as pictures that must ultimately be ruled out of the pictorial realm. Thus, insofar as syncretism satisfies the above requirement, the theory must provide an explanation in its own terms as to why such things must be ruled out. I have chosen to deal with this point as the last topic of this book as it deserves special consideration.

As I already said in chap. I, if one is a perceptualist about pictures, it is difficult to maintain that there are pictures of things that cannot be perceived, either in the weaker sense of pictures of perceivable things as having unperceivable properties – for instance, a picture of a human being as having an institutional feature, such as *being a Prime Minister* – or in the stronger sense of pictures of unperceivable things – for instance, a picture of Beauty or of the number Two.

Now, the syncretist obviously shares this perceptualist worry. Yet to begin with, modulo a previous understanding of the distinction between perceivable and unperceivable properties, the syncretist may well account for pictures of perceivable things as having unperceivable properties. To be sure, she can say that the figurative content of a picture must contain only perceivable properties, insofar as it coincides with the content of the recognitional fold of the relevant state of perceiving-in. Yet she may admit that the pictorial content of a picture can contain unperceivable properties, provided that they are properties of perceivable things. For she may say that insofar as that pictorial content is compatible with the picture's figurative content – the grouping properties (from the external perspective(s)) that the pictorial content involves are roughly the same as the grouping properties (from the corresponding internal perspective(s)) of what one sees in the picture, i.e., its figurative content – there is no problem in classifying that picture as a *pictorial* representation.

Let us consider e.g. Jacques-Louis David's *The Coronation of Napoleon*. In this painting, we see many human beings among which one stands out while holding a golden circlet in his hands. We may take this painting as representing either one subject or other ones with roughly the same grouping properties (from one external perspective) as what we see in the painting (from one internal perspective). Yet since we comply with David's intentions on this concern, we take this to be a painting of Napoleon as being coronated as the French emperor in a public ceremony. Certainly, the institutional property of *being coronated as the French emperor* is not a perceptual property. However, since the subject of the picture – Napoleon, a perceivable thing, who is being coronated in such a ceremony – is compatible with the figurative content one sees in the painting – namely, that a human male is standing out from a crowd of human beings, holding a golden circlet in his hands – then the painting is a genuine picture.



Figure 8.2 Jacques-Louis David, *The Coronation of Napoleon*, 1806-07; Musée du Louvre - Wikimedia Commons, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jacques-Louis_David,_The_Coronation_of_Napoleon_edit.jpg

However, the syncretist will not allow for pictures of unperceivable things, first of all of abstract entities, at least if they are *free idealities*, i.e., mind-independent *abstracta*,³⁸⁷ like Platonic ideas or numbers. For, given their own abstract character, such things cannot have grouping properties, hence they cannot be similar in such properties to pictorial vehicles. Thus, there is no way to perceive one such *abstractum* in a picture, let alone for the picture to have it as its pictorial subject. At most, therefore, the item

purportedly depicting such an *abstractum* would be a mere representation of it. As a further result, if we wish to stick to the idea that such an item is a picture, we must ascribe it a *different* yet perceivable subject compatible with its figurative content; as we have seen before, that subject may well mobilize not only perceivable but also unperceivable properties. In Delacroix's aforementioned *Liberty Leading the People*, we definitely see a half-naked woman standing out from a crowd of both living and dead bodies while holding a flag. Yet despite its title, this painting is not a picture of the Platonic idea of Liberty as leading people; at most, it is a mere representation of this idea. For unlike the woman seen in the painting, this very idea, *qua* mind-independent abstract being, has no grouping properties whatsoever that it roughly shares with the painting. Yet as a further result, the painting may well be a picture of another yet perceivable subject compatible with the woman one sees in it; say, a white 19th century lady. As to the properties mobilized by that subject in the pictorial content the painting thus possesses, the property of *being white* is certainly a perceivable property, while the property of *being a 19th century individual* is not.

So far, so good. With regards to the aforementioned cases, the syncretist is likely to stick to the ordinary intuition claiming their lack of figurativity. Yet there are cases of representations that are more problematic in this respect. On the one hand, for the perceptualist, and hence the syncretist, they should be ruled out of pictorial representations. For the subjects they are about are – *prima facie* at least – unperceivable things, since they are somehow impossible entities. Yet on the other hand in such cases intuitions seem to lie on the other side. For it would seem that we do in fact have pictures of these entities, at least in the case of schematic representations of ordinary riddles like the aforementioned Penrose triangle, or the devil's fork, as well as in the case of pictorial masterpieces like Maurits Cornelis Escher's *Waterfall*, or Giambattista Piranesi's *Prisons*.

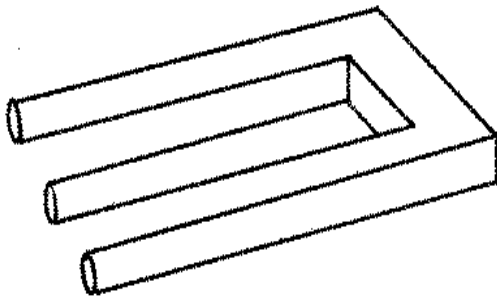


Figure 8.3 The devil's fork

Figure 8.4 Giambattista Piranesi, *Prisons VII from Carceri d'Invenzione*, 1761; Dallas Museum of Art Dallas, Texas, USA – ARTstor Collection, Dallas Museum of Art Collection Formerly in The AMICO Library

Yet, on second thought, the notion that there can be pictures that represent impossible entities, so as to have an impossible pictorial content, sounds odd.

Clearly, there cannot be such pictures when a contradictory representational content is at stake. First of all, as many people say,³⁸⁸ there cannot be *pictorial* representations of negative contents. The syncretist agrees. First, one cannot perceive a negation in a picture, or in other terms, its figurative content cannot be negative, as the following example easily proves. *Prima facie*, one may suppose that the following sign is the *pictorial* analogue of the negative sentence “This is not a smoking area”.



Figure 8.5 No smoking

But of course this is not the case. For pictorially speaking, what one can see in the above sign is just a black lit cigarette behind a red circle crossed out by a red slash. So, if this sign has a figurative content, such a content contains no halo of negation. To be sure, one might guess that negation only enters the pictorial content of such a sign. Yet this is not the case either. For second, if the figurative content of a picture cannot be negative, neither can its pictorial content. For if the representational content that p can well be compatible with such a figurative content, then its negative counterpart, the representational content that $non-p$, cannot be so compatible. For it is hardly the case that both such contents can be similar in grouping properties to what can be perceived in the picture, i.e., the thing constituting its figurative content. If one sees a ‘ F -ish’ thing in a picture, then the picture may well be a picture of a F but it cannot be a picture of what is not a F . As a consequence, returning to the above sign, if it represents a negative content, this depends on the fact that it is taken as a non-pictorial representation that conventionally has such a content as its mere representational content.

Moreover, if the above is the case, then there cannot be pictorial representations of contradictory contents, either. For a contradictory content contains a negation; since a negation cannot be pictorially represented, the same holds true of a contradictory content.³⁸⁹

Furthermore, the same predicament also holds true when a representational content including incompatible features is at stake. Either because such a content is, again, implicitly contradictory or because, even if such a content does not amount to a contradiction – as some would put it, it is metaphysically impossible yet logically possible – there are no grouping properties the picture’s vehicle and such a representational content allegedly share. Once again, according to the syncretist, in order for a picture to have a pictorial content, this content must be compatible with what is perceived in it, i.e., its figurative content. In order for this compatibility to occur, the two contents must involve items that roughly share their grouping properties (with respect to the relevant perspective(s)). Yet if a representation has a content with incompatible features, this content cannot be perceived: there is no metaphysically possible world in which someone perceives the scene constituting that content as a

genuine state of affairs of that world. Thus, this representational content is such that the items it involves cannot have grouping properties, for grouping properties are clearly perceptual properties. As a result, the content is incompatible with whatever is seen, if anything, in that representation: the purported figurative content of that representation. All in all, therefore, either that representation has a representational content yet no figurative value at all, or if it has a figurative value, it is not a picture that has a content containing incompatible features as its pictorial content.

Let us take, for instance, a drawing exhibiting a straight line. One might say that this is the picture of a round square from the side. But this is clearly not the case.³⁹⁰ For, insofar as a round square is made of incompatible features that make it unperceivable, the drawing of a straight line shares no grouping properties with such a thing. So, no matter what one sees (if anything) in such a drawing, it does not amount to a figurative content with which an alleged pictorial content constituted of that round square is compatible. Once again, the drawing may well be a mere representation of a round square, but not a *pictorial* representation of it. Even if it has a figurative value, this value does not allow it to be a *picture* of a round square.

Yet, the pictorial impossibilist may retort, all the above considerations say nothing against the cases that are intuitively taken to be the paradigmatic instances of impossible pictures, such as the aforementioned figures: the Penrose triangle, the devil's fork, and so on. To be sure, their content includes incompatibilities of some sort: e.g. a 'triangular' solid, parts of which are at the same time both before and behind other parts of it, a 'fork' of which one part is at the same time both its full 'head' and an empty background for a figure that stands out, etc. Yet it is hard to deny that such a content is primarily figurative, insofar as we see those incompatibilities in the figure we are facing. Therefore, are not *these* the proper cases of impossible pictures? Moreover, should not the syncretist herself allow for such pictures, insofar as she takes the recognitional fold of a perceiving-in state to be a knowingly illusory perception of the picture's vehicle as a certain item? For she may well say, then, that in such a fold sometimes one knowingly illusorily perceives that vehicle as being an item with incompatible features.³⁹¹

We must be very careful here, however. Though fascinating, the cases in question are not to be taken for granted as being items that possess a figurative value. Clearly, when we see a figure such as the ones listed above – the Penrose triangle, etc. – we definitely see something; namely, a two-dimensional item that clearly has no impossible features, insofar as it is made of two-dimensional lines and shapes that are all compatible among each other. Problems arise as soon as we start ascribing some three-dimensionality to what we are facing, hence, as soon as we try to ascribe a figurative value to what we face by purportedly seeing an item in it. For, at that point, we cannot manage to group the figure's elements *as a whole* with respect to depth. As we may recall from chap. VI, in singling out grouping properties, our attention works *holistically*. This is why one and the same array of elements can be grouped differently, as it happens with perceptually ambiguous pictures. Fixing our gaze on one point of the picture yields a way of seeing the picture only insofar as that picture is seen as a whole so as to *thoroughly* rearrange its elements in a certain manner. Thus, different fixings yield different perceptual readings of an ambiguous picture insofar as they prompt different such thorough rearrangements. Now, as to putative impossible pictures no such rearrangement occurs. That is, in such cases, once we fix our gaze on one point of the picture, our attention is not able to *thoroughly* rearrange the figure's elements in a certain manner. For we do not manage to thoroughly group those elements as far depth is concerned. Thus, in the case of ambiguous pictures we may legitimately speak of *multistable* perceptual readings. For the different groupings manage to let us see the relevant picture in thoroughly different yet *robust* manners: if we see that picture one way, we do not see it another way, and *vice versa*. Yet in the case of putative impossible pictures we should rather speak of *unstable* perceptual readings. For our attention is unable to provide a thorough three-dimensional grouping of the involved figure's elements.

This perceptual instability accounts not only for the longer time of fixation one such figure requires – our attention repeatedly tries to perform a thorough grouping operation with that figure's elements – but also for the feeling of discomfort we ultimately experience when facing such a figure – the experienced consequence of our

attention's grouping failure.³⁹² Since, when it works, the task of grouping yields a way not only of ordering, but also of orienting an item's elements, the feeling we experience in such cases of grouping failure is literally a feeling of *disorientation* with the figure. As a matter of fact, the most natural verbal reaction we end up having with these putative impossible pictures would be to say (as Wittgenstein once said with regards to philosophical problems): "I don't know my way about". In such cases, to repeat, our attention indeed takes more time to perform its grouping task, which eventually ends in a loop, for there is no way to produce a thorough three-dimensional grouping of the putative picture's elements. As a result of this predicament, there is no chance for our mind to entertain a state that has one fold, the configurational fold, in which something we face is arranged three-dimensionally, on the basis of which another fold of that state, the recognitional fold, emerges in which something else is perceived in that very something. For no configurational fold with its properly enriched content occurs in such a case. Since, as we have seen, the recognitional fold depends on the configurational fold, a fortiori in such a case there is no recognitional fold either. In want of the latter fold, the putative impossible picture has no figurative content as a whole; a fortiori, it is no picture at all.

To be sure, the pictorial impossibilist might again stress that, if for the syncretist the recognitional fold of a perceiving-in state is basically an illusory perception as of a certain scene, then one cannot rule out that perceptually facing a putatively impossible picture amounts to entertaining one such state. In point of fact, there may be cases in which we illusorily perceive things as impossible, as when e.g. we perceive some external object of the world as if it were an instance of a Penrose's triangle. While facing that object (see the right-hand side of the following figure), we entertain in our mind an illusory perception as of a Penrose's triangle (amounting to the left-hand side of the following figure).³⁹³

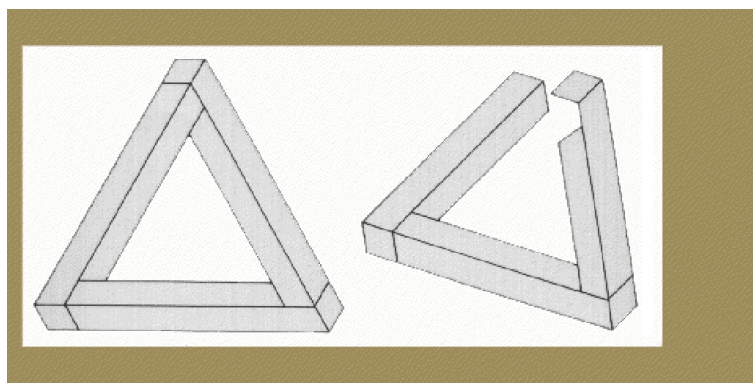


Figure 8.6 A possible triangle seen as an impossible one

Now, if there are such cases, why can the illusory perceptions they mobilize not become the recognitional folds of proper perceiving-in states, which would subsequently acquire correspondingly adequate configurational folds as well? Would not our putatively impossible pictures then be surrounded by a perceiving-in state, so as to acquire a proper figurative value like any other picture?

Yet, the syncretist will reply, such cases are not what is at stake here at all. In these cases, we perceive *possible* three-dimensional objects as having incompatible features. Yet what we should have in the recognitional fold of our alleged perceiving-in state should, instead, be the perception of a certain, typically two-dimensional, item as an *impossible* object having incompatible features, hence a perception as of an impossible object having such features. Now, in order for the item we face not to turn out to be a hallucinatory picture, but a genuine picture, this alleged recognitional fold should be grounded in a certain configurational fold concerning that item. Yet there cannot be such a fold. For, as we have already seen, we cannot impossibly group the aforementioned item's elements. Hence, there cannot be such a recognitional fold either, resulting in there being no chance for that item to have the required figurative value.

All in all, therefore, it is improper to say that a putative impossible picture is a picture whose figurative content (a fortiori, the alleged pictorial content compatible with it) is simply made of incompatible features. Rather, according to the syncretist we should say that such a putative impossible picture is no picture at all. For, since there is no thorough three-dimensional grouping of its elements, appearances notwithstanding

there is no configurational fold to which a recognitional fold may correspond, let alone a fold amounting to a knowingly illusory perception of an impossibility. Thus, there is nothing to perceive in that putative picture, that is, there is no figurative content, a fortiori no pictorial content compatible with that content. So once again, if such a putative picture is a representation of a content with incompatible features, it is rather a non-pictorial representation of such a content.

In order to illustrate this point more vividly, let me further stress a comparison I have already hinted at before, namely a comparison between a picture that is ambiguous because of the different groupings involving the third dimension, like the Rubin vase, and a putative impossible picture, like the Penrose triangle. In the Rubin vase, depending on how we segment the picture's elements as to their figure-ground relations, we arrive at two thorough perceptual readings of the picture to which two different seeing-in states surrounding that picture correspond. As I said in chap. VI, in these two seeing-in states the different configurational folds in which these different figure-ground relations occur are arranged so as to let correspondingly different recognitional folds emerge. Now, each such reading is stable. Once we see the picture in a certain way, we cannot see it in the other way until it is accordingly reversed. Yet as to the Penrose triangle, we do not arrive at even a single reading of the figure, precisely because we are not able to provide a thorough figure-ground segmentation of the figure's elements. What *prima facie* seems to stand out from something else goes on to immediately appear to be placed behind that very something, and *vice versa*. This perceptual predicament leads our attention into a loop, insofar as no attempt to provide a thorough three-dimensional grouping succeeds, ultimately generating a feeling of discomfort, or better yet, a feeling of disorientation with regards to the figure.

At this point, there are two possible ways out that would allow us recover figurativity for a putative impossible picture. The first consists in eventually finding, appearances notwithstanding, a thorough three-dimensional grouping of the relevant figure's elements that still allows one to see in it a perfectly *possible* figurative content. Many putative impossible pictures actually elicit such a grouping. The Penrose triangle, for instance, can be given an utterly possible figurative content. In fact, let us again

consider the image I presented four paragraphs above. This time, let us take what is on the left-hand side of the image as a two-dimensional figure that constitutes the Penrose geometrical ‘monster’. Indeed, this figure can also be figuratively seen in a *possible* way, which is now illustrated by what is on the right-hand side of the image. That figure can well be seen as a picture of an item whose left arm actually fits a cavity contained at the top of its right arm. In order for the Penrose figure to be seen in this way, all if its figure-ground segmentations must work in such a way as to yield a thorough 3-D grouping for the figure, hence to contribute to the generation of a seeing-in state, for the figure’s perceiver, whose configurational fold lets a certain recognitional fold emerge as having a perfectly consistent figurative content.³⁹⁴

Yet when no such thorough grouping turns out to be available, the second way out imposes itself. This consists in allowing for *local* figurative readings of the whole figure, that is, in allowing certain portions of the figure to be such that, once one attentionally focuses on each of them in its entirety, each portions permit an ordinary three-dimensional grouping. Thus, each of such portions lets one see something in it so as to produce a figurative content (a different one for each portion). As a further result, each of these portions may well be a picture endowed with an ordinary possible pictorial content. If we return once more to the Penrose triangle, we are left with the following situation.

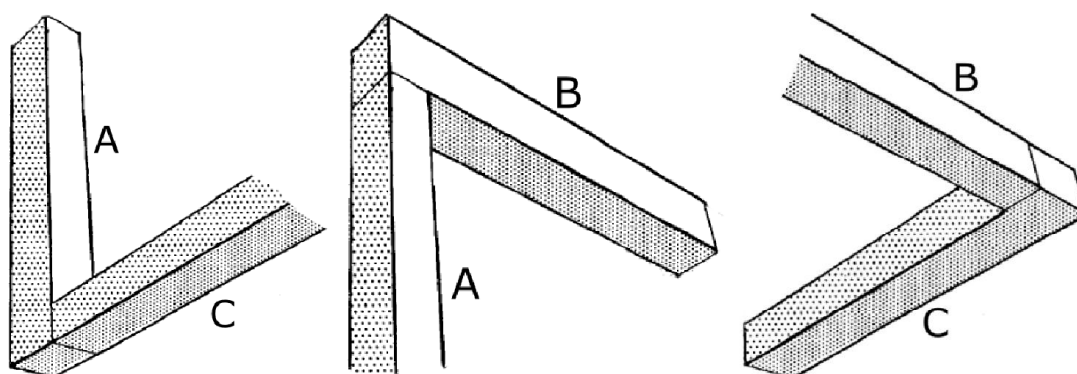


Figure 8.7 Portions of the Penrose triangle endowed with figurative value

The second way out seems remindful of what is sometimes reported as the traditional approach to putative impossible pictures. According to this approach, properly speaking, all such putative pictures are not pictures, but rather the result of pictures that, when taken together, are not consistent, though each depicts a possible object.³⁹⁵ In the Penrose case, if one tries to combine the three above portions together, what results is precisely the impossible figure.

Here, however, we must again be very careful. Insofar as a putative impossible picture is no picture at all, by speaking of “portions of a figure” that are endowed with a figurative value I do not mean to say that such a figure has such portions as its *figurative parts*. For first of all, if some spatiotemporal occupier has no figurative value as a whole, then it only has parts in the standard sense in which any such object has parts – a *spatial* sense, in this case. If *qua* non-pictorial representation a putative impossible picture is a spatiotemporal occupier, then it only has parts in the above sense.³⁹⁶

Moreover, each such spatial part of a spatial whole may well have a figurative value. In the syncretistic account, this means that, as grasped in the proper configurational fold of a certain seeing-in state, such parts are enriched with further properties over and above the merely spatial ones; namely, the relevant grouping properties in three dimensions. As such, any such enriched portion has a figurative content that coincides with the content of the recognitional fold that emerges in the relevant seeing-in state surrounding that portion out of that state’s proper configurational fold. In the above case, each enriched portion of the Penrose triangle has a figurative content of its own, that is, it is such that a certain three-dimensional solid, namely, a different half of a triangular body, is seen in it. However, such an enriched portion is no longer a part of the whole figure, for a non-figurative item cannot have figurative parts.

Finally, suppose *per absurdum* that the corresponding putative impossible picture were to have a figurative content – which is actually not the case, for as I just said there is no chance for its elements to be thoroughly grouped in a certain way.³⁹⁷ Yet even if this were the case, the enriched portions in question mentioned above would not

be figurative parts of that picture. For in general, no figurative item, i.e., an item endowed with grouping properties in three dimensions over and above its spatial components, has figuratively independent parts. For insofar as grouping is *holistic*, a figurative item can have parts only insofar as they depend on it. In other terms, what is a figurative part of a figurative whole works as such a part only within such a whole.³⁹⁸

Ambiguous pictures notoriously show this point. If we revert to the ‘duck-rabbit’- picture, we find that the ‘beakish’ part of it – that is, a certain portion of the picture’s vehicle when it is enriched with *certain* grouping properties – is such only within its ‘duckish’ perceptual reading. For outside such a reading there is no ‘beakish’ part. *Mutatis mutandis*, the same holds true of the ‘earish’ part of it, that is, the thing that merely shares with the ‘beakish’ part the shapes that constitute a spatial portion of the non-enriched picture’s vehicle. For that part turns out to be an utterly different thing from the ‘beakish’ part insofar as it results from the vehicle’s enrichment with *other* grouping properties. This ‘earish’ part is a part of the picture only within the ‘rabbitish’ perceptual reading of such a picture.³⁹⁹

Incidentally, this is another way of seeing the difference between perceptually ambiguous pictures and merely representationally ambiguous pictures. Although a merely representationally ambiguous picture has different pictorial contents, in any such interpretation it is still partitioned in one and the same way. For the grouping properties its pictorial vehicle holistically involves remain the same. Thus, as a whole it still has the same figurative value.⁴⁰⁰

Wittgenstein realized this dependence of figurative parts on a figurative whole. In order to remind us, *inter alia*, how paradoxical Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland* is in saying that the Cheshire cat had disappeared leaving just his smile hanging in the air, he remarked that “a smiling mouth *smiles* only within a human face” (2009⁴:I,§583). If we were to change Wittgenstein’s motto to “a picture of a smiling mouth *smiles* only in a picture of a face”, we would end up precisely with the point the syncretist is after. Not accidentally, pictures of the Cheshire cat who is about to disappear depict not only the cat’s smiling mouth, but also the cat’s eyes. For it is only in this case that the relevant picture can still have a ‘mouthish’ part. If this picture only

leaves us with a depiction of a certain mouth-like shape, are we not entitled to take it, instead, as a picture of a crescent moon?

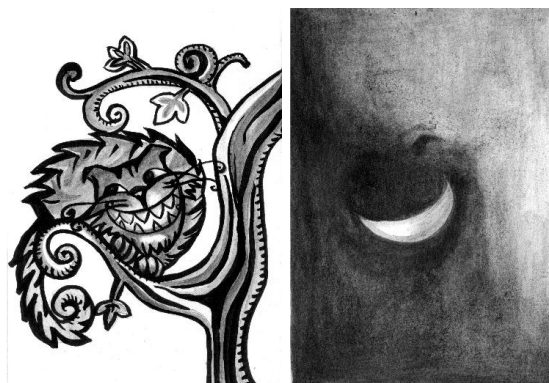


Figure 8.8 The Cheshire cat (by courtesy of Paola Tosti)

Figure 8.9 The cat's smile? (by courtesy of Paola Tosti)

As a result of this predicament, even if *per absurdum* the Penrose triangle (as well as similar images) were an impossible picture, it would not be constituted by the above figurative items as its figurative parts. For such items have possible three-dimensional groupings, while the Penrose triangle would overall have just impossible such groupings. Thus, if it were to have figurative parts, it would have parts that, *qua* dependent on it, would, instead, have impossible groupings as well.

Let me take stock. If what I have said is correct, then there are no pictures at all with an impossible pictorial content. Something that seems to be a picture of such a content is, ultimately, either a picture of a possible content or a mere non-pictorial representation of an impossible representational content. Such a representation allows for each of its spatial parts to be enriched so as to have a figurative value of its own that does not yet cumulate with the extant values of the other spatial parts into a figurative value of that representation as a whole. All in all, therefore, (x3) is fully respected by the syncretist as well.

As I said before, since syncretism addresses all of the *desiderata* necessary for an adequate theory of depiction, it deserves consideration in this field of research. Whether this consideration is *good* will be left for the reader to decide.

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¹ Typically, these are pictures of actually spatiotemporally existing individuals, like Barack Obama and Silvio Berlusconi. Yet I also wish to allow for pictures of actually non-spatiotemporally existing individuals, i.e., at least both fictional entities like Nessie and Pegasus and merely possible entities like Elip, the possible son of Elizabeth I and Philip II. Cf. chaps. III, VII.

² Here I follow Kulvicki's (2006, 2013) characterization.

³ Cf. again Kulvicki (2006, 2013).

⁴ Cf. Abell (2009:183), Blumson (2009a:144).

⁵ In the same vein, although one also speaks of *mental* images, it is not to be taken for granted that such images are figurative images, let alone pictures, simply located in the mind and thereby sharing a substantial commonality with figurative images in general.

⁶ Cf. Wollheim (1964:27), (1987:46,62), (1998:266).

⁷ For this way of putting things cf. also Wiesing (2010:27,37-8).

⁸ On such images and their importance both in the ancient and modern theories of depiction, cf. Janson (1961). Wollheim (1980²) took such images as the starting point of his 'seeing-in' theory of depiction.

⁹ Cf. Alberti (1966), Leonardo (1989).

¹⁰ For this difference cf. Abell (2009:184-5).

¹¹ Being about something may not entail having a content that is assessable for accuracy. Yet in the case of pictures, a picture that is about something hardly fails to have a content of the above kind. Can one depict a particular something without depicting it as having some properties? For more on this see chap. VIII.

¹² Cf. Kim (1996:21).

¹³ See also Crane (2013:98, 101).

¹⁴ For more on this, cf. e.g. Crane (2001:18-30).

¹⁵ I develop this point – which I borrow from Crane (2001) – in my Voltolini (2009, 2013c).

¹⁶ Cf. e.g. Fodor (1990a,b).

¹⁷ Cf. also Novitz (1975:148,155).

¹⁸ Various people fail to take into proper account the fact that the representational content of a picture is a pictorial content, i.e., a representational content that is constrained by the picture's figurative content. Cf. e.g. Gregory (2013:138).

¹⁹ Cf. again Novitz (1975:151).

²⁰ Some people believe that paintings of saints who lived much before the creation of such paintings must be dealt with in the same way (cf. e.g. Hopkins (1995:433-4), Macpherson (2010:486)). I disagree: such paintings are depictions insofar as those saints respectively constitute their pictorial content that is bound by their respective figurative content. For my reasons for such a disagreement, cf. chap. VI.

²¹ I borrow this example from Twardowski (1977:101).

²² Wiesing (2010:9-15) maintains that there is a third paradigm, the so-called *anthropological* paradigm, defended e.g. by Jonas (1962). Yet, in their respective insistence on the artefactuality of a picture *qua* representation and on the ability to discern in a picture what is not there as the distinctively human facts about pictures – cf. Jonas (1962:203,208,211) – the main claims of this paradigm can be traced back either to the semiotic or to the perceptualist paradigm. In this respect, this third paradigm is a forerunner of syncretism.

²³ On the idea that objective resemblance theories belong to the perceptualist paradigm insofar as they involve similarities between *appearances* of the picture's vehicle and of the picture's subject, cf. e.g. Pole (1974:71). To be sure, it is not easy to find a real supporter of these theories in its naivest form, which claims that something is a depiction of its subject iff the former resembles the latter. Not even Plato's *Cratylus*, which is the well-acknowledged source of these theories, defends the idea of objective resemblance in this form. Sophisticated contemporary versions of such theories have been held by Neander (1987), Sachs-Hombach (2003), Hyman (2006), Abell (2009), Blumson (2009a).

²⁴ For which, cf. Gombrich (1960), although the idea notoriously traces back to Plato's *Republic*.

²⁵ Insofar as they appeal to an experiential factor, the relevant perceptualists of the second group cannot give a theory of depiction without giving a theory of what this experience of pictures consists in. Cf. on this Abell (2009). By appealing to a recognitional *ability*, recognitional theorists instead hold that an *experience* is not needed in order to recognize a subject in a picture. Cf. Lopes (1996). Seeing-in theorists may move in the same direction when they allow for an *unconscious* seeing-in: cf. Nanay (2010b, 2011b).

²⁶ Among the defenders of the distinction between derived and original intentionality and its application to pictures, cf. Dretske (1988, 1990, 1995), Fodor (1987, 1990b), Searle (1983).

²⁷ For more on this, cf. e.g. Wiesing (2010:39-40), Novitz (1975:148).

²⁸ Cf. Alberti (1966:43), reprised in Hopkins as “whatever can be depicted can be seen” (1998:28). Gregory (2010:25) seems to water down the constraint by saying “whatever can be depicted can apparently be seen”. Yet insofar as one may say that seeing and seeming to see have the same phenomenological character, they share their ‘what-is-like’ aspect (as many hold: cf. e.g. Lowe 2008), such a watering down is more apparent than real. I will come back to this issue in chap. VIII.

²⁹ Hopkins holds that there is a second reading of Alberti’s motto “whatever can be depicted can be seen”, according to which in it “whatever”, instead of covering individuals, as I have meant when using that expression all along, covers properties: “any property a picture ascribes must be one the possession of which by an item is in general visually detectable” (1995:429). Yet the two readings must go hand in hand. Otherwise it would be possible for a picture to depict an *abstractum* by ascribing to it a visually (perceptually) detectable property (for instance, one might say that Delacroix’s aforementioned painting depicts Liberty as running over corpses). Yet as I have said, the picture can only symbolize an *abstractum*, by rather depicting another perceivable subject that is selected out of a figurative content which mobilizes only visually (perceptually) detectable properties. More on this in chap. VIII.

³⁰ I say that seeing-in is a mental state rather than a mental experience in order to allow for the possibility, explicitly thematized by Nanay (2010b, 2011b), of unconscious seeing-in. See chaps. V-VI.

³¹ This label comes from Wollheim (1998:218).

³² This is not the exact literal distinction that Goodman draws. In Goodman’s account, pictures of singular individuals and most generic pictures, on the one hand, flank pictures of non-existent individuals on the other. Since the former have either a singular or a multiple denotation they are the relational ones, while since the latter denote nothing they are the non-relational ones. Cf. Goodman (1968:21-4,30). Yet on the one hand, one may doubt that pictures of non-existent individuals are non-relational; one may rather say that they refer to non-existent items. Cf. on this Hyman (2006:66fn.12), Wiesing (2010:45), Wollheim (2003:11). On the other hand, there is no doubt that all generic pictures are non-relational. For from the fact that a picture depicts some *F* or other one cannot infer that there is something that picture depicts, even if one endorses a non-existentially loaded reading of the particular quantifier. Now, as Wollheim (1970:533) said in his review of Goodman (1968), it is failure of existential generalization that characterizes non-relational pictures. So, the relational/non-relational distinction should rather be formulated as I just did in the text.

³³ Cf. Goodman (1968:5,30-1).

³⁴ Cf. Goodman (1968:5).

³⁵ Cf. Kripke (1980:94).

³⁶ Once again, the examples Goodman literally provides of non-relational representations rather mobilize signs for non-existent individuals. Cf. (1968:21-4). Yet as I said in fn.32, his view of non-relational representations seems instead to apply to generic signs.

³⁷ As Wollheim (1970:534) rightly noted, Goodman's phrasing "*x* is a representation-of-a-*F*" should rather be read as "*x* is a representation of-a-*F*", in order to stick to the idea that relational and non-relational pictures are just two species of (pictorial) representations. Goodman later agreed on this. Cf. (1970:564).

³⁸ Walton, who has contributed to originally drawing this distinction between transparent and opaque pictures, holds that transparent pictures and opaque pictures are different kinds of pictures. Cf. (1984). Hyman (2000:22) rules mirror images out of pictures. He treats them as being a different kind of images precisely because of their transparency.

³⁹ Cf. e.g. Lopes (1996:182-7), Newall (2011:55-61).

⁴⁰ For a similar example cf. Wiesing (2010:46-7).

⁴¹ On this cf. Mag Uidhir & Pratt (2012:140).

⁴² Hyman (2000:22) insists that as to mirror images we do not discern their subjects in them, but rather we straightforwardly see such subjects. This is why for him they are different kinds of pictures. Yet the reason why for him in such images we straightforwardly see the subjects of these images is disputable. He says that unlike genuine pictures, in order to grasp the subjects of mirror images, such subjects themselves, not the images, must be illuminated. That the subjects of mirror images must be illuminated can well be true, since those images are causally related to them. Yet if only such subjects were illuminated, clearly one could not grasp them in those images, let alone see them straightforwardly.

⁴³ In point of fact, Goodman was ready to accept such an amendment. Cf. (1970:566).

⁴⁴ Traditionally this theory is seen in Peirce's (1931) idea of icons as signs that distinctively signify by resembling their subjects. However, it is likely that not even Peirce has defended the theory in such a naïve form. If one wishes to find someone who maintains the theory in this naïve form, one must typically look for people who have dealt with depictions only marginally. Cf. e.g. this formulation in Ogden & Richards: figurative images are "more or less directly like the[ir] referent[s]" (1923:12fn.1). Yet see also Jonas: "an image is an object that bears a plainly recognizable, or at will discernible, likeness to another object" (1962:203).

⁴⁵ Cf. Goodman (1968:6ff.). Clearly, in (1968) Goodman distinguished between what makes a representation a representation *of* something and what makes a representation *pictorial*, by denying in both cases that an appeal to resemblance is tenable. It is however a pity that, as he acknowledged later (cf. Goodman-Elgin (1988:121fn.1)), in this respect he made no terminological distinction between representations *qua* representations and representations *qua* depictions.

⁴⁶ Cf. Kulvicki (2006:14-5).

⁴⁷ For similar considerations directly tracing back to Goodman, cf. Goodman (1968:226), Goodman-Elgin (1988:118,129).

⁴⁸ To be sure, however, Goodman denied that his own formulation of this subclaim provides jointly sufficient conditions of figurativity. Cf. Goodman-Elgin (1988:121).

⁴⁹ Cf. Goodman (1968:132-3), Goodman-Elgin (1998:125).

⁵⁰ Cf. Goodman (1968:135-6), Goodman-Elgin (1998:125).

⁵¹ Cf. Goodman (1968:148-54).

⁵² Cf. Goodman (1968:136-7,226).

⁵³ Cf. Goodman (1968:153,227).

⁵⁴ Cf. Goodman (1968:160).

⁵⁵ For more on this problem cf. Kulvicki (2006:6). The problem lies originally in Bach (1970:126) and is reprised, by means of a different example not having to do with digitalized images, by Blumson (2011:5-6).

⁵⁶ Cf. Goodman (1968:228-9).

⁵⁷ Cf. Goodman (1968:229-30).

⁵⁸ For more on this problem cf. Kulvicki (2006:22-3).

⁵⁹ For more on this cf. Schier (1986:31).

⁶⁰ Though it is addressed to conventionalist theories in general, this counterexample is found in Wollheim (1964:25). It is explicitly used against Goodman in Kulvicki (2006:24). For another similar counterexample cf. Peacocke (1987:405); further cases in Kulvicki (2013:99). Bach (1970:129) has proposed an amendment of Goodman's condition by adding the further condition that a pictorial system must be correlatively continuous, i.e., it must be such that for any two characters another character lies in between them whose designation in its turn is in between the respective designations of such characters, and *vice versa*. Yet this amendment does not seem to deal with those counterexamples either.

⁶¹ As Goodman himself was ready to admit. Cf. Goodman-Elgin (1988:131).

⁶² In Goodman-Elgin (1988:131), Goodman seems to be aware of this point, insofar as he comes to say that his criteria of figurativity are basically syntactic.

⁶³ Interestingly enough, Elgin indeed admits that one must draw the difference between what a picture depicts and what it symbolizes, but she does not seem to see that her semiotic framework does not seem to account for this difference. Cf. Goodman-Elgin (1988:113).

⁶⁴ Cf. Kulvicki (2006:30).

⁶⁵ Cf. Kulvicki (2006:38).

⁶⁶ Cf. Kulvicki (2006:35).

⁶⁷ Cf. Kulvicki (2006:40-1).

⁶⁸ Cf. Kulvicki (2006:33).

⁶⁹ Cf. Kulvicki (2006:41).

⁷⁰ Cf. Kulvicki (2006:53). For a somewhat similar idea – with content-bearing properties instead of syntactically relevant properties – cf. Newall (2005:71).

⁷¹ Incidentally, this is not the case with verbal systems. If we take any expression, e.g. a definite description – “the king of France” – and we make a description of this description – “the expression beginning with the article ‘the’ ... and ending with the proper name ‘France’” – it is clear that the two descriptions, the first description and the metadescription of that description, are syntactically different. Cf. Kulvicki (2006:53).

⁷² Cf. Kulvicki (2006:62).

⁷³ Cf. Blumson (2011).

⁷⁴ Kulvicki himself doubts such a counterexample for analogous reasons. Cf. (2006:62).

⁷⁵ Cf. Kulvicki (2006:53).

⁷⁶ Cf. Kulvicki (2006:62).

⁷⁷ Cf. Haugeland (1998:185-9).

⁷⁸ Cf. Kulvicki (2006:57-9).

⁷⁹ Cf. Kulvicki (2006:168).

⁸⁰ Cf. Kulvicki (2006:63-77). To be sure, Kulvicki puts things in a slightly different way. He says that, insofar as in both representational systems the syntactically relevant properties in question are different with respect to a representation and its metarepresentation, neither system is literally structurally transparent. Yet, since the first system is such that the syntactically relevant properties in question are just slightly different, i.e., they are similar even if not identical, unlike the second system it is *almost* structurally transparent, hence pictorial. Nonetheless, I do not think Kulvicki really needs such a complication. For since he holds that syntactical identity of a representation simply *supervenes* on its syntactically relevant properties, he can well hold that whenever the syntactically relevant properties of a representation and of its metarepresentation are similar, such representations are still syntactically identical hence their system is structurally transparent, period.

⁸¹ A similar critique is anticipated in Dilworth (2005b:89). Newall (2005:72) replies that in the similar case of a Fauve painting that depicts another Fauve painting the relevant identity between the former and the latter painting is preserved, insofar as the relation between their hues is preserved although their hues are not identical. Yet what if other modifications occur in the metapicture that depicts the relevant picture? To stick to the further example Newall himself provides, is the part of Henri Matisse’s *The Red Studio* that depicts Matisse’s *La Luxe II* syntactically identical with *La Luxe II*, since unlike the latter the skin colors of the characters that stand out in that depiction of *La Luxe II* are different, so that no hue relation is there preserved?

⁸² Cf. Kulvicki (2006:62).

⁸³ Cf. Haugeland (1998:189).

⁸⁴ Cf. Kulvicki (2006:59).

⁸⁵ Cf. Kulvicki (2006:166-9). Recently, Kulvicki has strengthened this point. Like the content of any perception whatsoever, the bare bones content of a picture is *vertically articulated*, i.e., it is structured along a series of abstraction levels that are all directly extractable and not inferable by the object of the perception (the picture's vehicle, in our case). For instance, if in a real scene one sees a shade of red, one also directly sees red, or at least something lighter than another color. Yet the same occurs if one sees that shade in a picture's vehicle. Cf. Kulvicki (2007, 2010).

⁸⁶ Cf. Kulvicki (2006:78).

⁸⁷ This is what Bantinaki (2008:488) understands Kulvicki to mean when he says that "in viewing a picture, we latch on to perceptually salient, rather ordinary instances of its bare bones content" (2006:174). Likewise according to Malinas "pictorial attributes which are exhibited or quasi-exhibited [grossly, a picture's bare bones content] engage viewers' recognitional abilities" (1991:296).

⁸⁸ As Wollheim originally said with respect to Goodman: "what we can see in [pictures of a different kind] is perhaps the perceptual counterpart to the requirements that Goodman imposes on a symbolic system adequate for representation" (1970:537). On the compatibility between semiotic and perceptualism cf. also Lopes (1996:57).

⁸⁹ In (2010:32-6), Wiesing instead maintains that, if resemblance is important in pictorial matters, it affects the relation between figurative and pictorial content. This idea comes back again in Briscoe (2014). As we will see in chap. VII, the syncretist will acknowledge that, once resemblance is taken to be relevant as far as depiction is concerned, there must be a similarity between such contents. Yet since resemblance is relevant for the figurativity factor of depiction, it must obtain between the picture's vehicle and the picture's subject via not only the fact that the picture's figurative content resembles its pictorial content, but also, and primarily, the fact that the picture's vehicle is similar to the items that constitute the picture's figurative content.

⁹⁰ Cf. Goodman (1968:4). This problem can hardly be circumvented by making the similarity that obtains between a picture and its subject an asymmetric relation of ontological dependence of the former on the latter, as Blinder (1986:20) proposes. First, it is unclear why an objective resemblance theorist has to appeal to a special relation of similarity, not the ordinary one. Second, if there is one such relation of ontological dependence it may well be ascribed to the representational component of depiction, insofar as some theorists of intentionality maintain that intentionality itself is one such relation (cf. Sacchi & Voltolini (2012)).

⁹¹ On this point, originally adumbrated in Pole (1974:71), cf. e.g. Davies (2006:173), Abell (2009:186), Blumson (2009a:146).

⁹² Cf. Goodman (1968:6).

⁹³ Cf. Goodman (1968:25).

⁹⁴ The *locus classicus* is Meinong (1960). (Im)possibilists about fictional entities, as well as artefactualists, neo-Meinongians and their syncretic combinations, all share (in different ways) such a belief. Cf. e.g. Thomasson (1999), Parsons (1980), Lewis (1978), Priest (2005), Voltolini (2006).

⁹⁵ Cf. Hyman (2006:66fn.12), Wiesing (2010:45), Wollheim (2003:11). The idea is also partially in Howell (1974:84-5,94-6).

⁹⁶ Cf. Priest (2005:60fn.7).

⁹⁷ This idea is considered – though not endorsed – by Blumson (2009b:529-30) and effectively defended by Neander (1987:225), Hyman (2012a:134). Another possibility consists in appealing to counterfactual resemblance between a picture and a non-existent thing: cf. Novitz (1975:151), Abell (2009:212).

⁹⁸ Cf. e.g. Priest (2005), Berto (2012).

⁹⁹ *Pace* Goodman, who thinks that most generic pictures are relations with multiple entities. Cf. (1968:21).

¹⁰⁰ As Chisholm (1967:203) originally suggested.

¹⁰¹ For this response cf. Hyman (2006:65-6), (2012a:131-2,134-6).

¹⁰² As Wollheim (1970:534) remarked with respect to Goodman.

¹⁰³ I have already proposed this move in my Voltolini (2012b:179). This move may still seem to rule out pictures of non-instantiated kinds. Yet by appealing to counterfactual resemblance, *merely possible* kinds can be depicted even though they are actually non-instantiated. As to *fictional* kinds, as e.g. *unicorn* – cf. Kripke (1980:157) – alleged pictures of them are rather pictures of the fictional individuals that actually instantiate them. So, they must be treated as pictures of fictional characters such as Holmes. For more on this see chap. VII. According to Kulvicki (2013:55), also Abell (2009) defends generic resemblance in depictive matters.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Goodman (1972:438). For more on this see Kulvicki (2013:53). To be sure, an objective resemblance theorist may reply that if something represents something else *in virtue of* resembling it, then the former depicts the latter – a thesis adumbrated by Walton (1970:338) and then reprised by Neander (1987), Files (1996). Blumson (2009a:147fn.9) ascribes such an approach to Sachs-Hombach (2003), although I am not clear whether he really maintains it; cf. (2003:173,176). To be sure, this reply is preliminarily controversial. For, in holding that the specific intentionality of a picture is given via resemblance, it endorses maximalism about depiction. Yet independently of this problem, for Goodman it would be either wrong or ineffective. For on the one hand, it may bring such a theorist back to the erroneous idea that for a picture to represent something depends on resembling it. On the other hand, even if that reply eschews this implausible consequence, as to a picture the similarity respects that the theorist may invoke for Goodman already presuppose that such a picture is a depiction. Cf. Goodman (1968:39); for more on this point see Kulvicki (2013:53-4). As I said, I find this reply independently problematic. Yet the above Goodmanian retort simply *assumes* that no *right* respect of resemblance, hence no

depiction-independent respect, can be found by an objective resemblance theorist. This assumption has yet to be proved: see immediately later in the text.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Goodman (1968:4-5). See also his (1972:437). Cf. again Kulvicki (2013:53).

¹⁰⁶ As McClure (1964) explicitly states. See also Manns (1971:286), Novitz (1975:151-3), Gilman (1991:176), Abell (2009:186), Blumson (2009a:145).

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Plato (1905-10:1, II, 423d, 432b-c).

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Descartes (1985:I,165).

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Newall (2011:67).

¹¹⁰ As we will see in chaps. VI-VII, a weakly mind-dependent property is still an objective property, for it depends on the mind only for its existence. Accordingly, a *strongly* mind-dependent property is a subjective property, for it depends on the mind for its individuation. On the difference between existential dependence and ontological dependence (dependence as to individuation) cf. Sacchi & Voltolini (2012).

¹¹¹ This notion of a visual pyramid comes from Alberti (1966); the same idea returns later in Reid (1997:83-4,96), this time expressed in terms of the picture's vehicle and the picture's subject sharing their *visible figure*.

¹¹² In recent times, the theory has been anticipated by Gibson (1954). For the first conceptual choice cf. Hyman (2006). For the second choice cf. instead Hopkins (1998). On the relationship between occlusion shape and outline shape, cf. Abell (2005). As to their difference, cf. Kulvicki (2013:56-60).

¹¹³ Cf. Hopkins (1998:62,68); Hyman (2006:78), (2012a:143).

¹¹⁴ In contemporary times, one may be tempted to ascribe this version of the doctrine to Hyman (2000, 2006, 2012a). Cf. Spinicci (2012a:92), Kulvicki (2013:60).

¹¹⁵ Cf. e.g. Hopkins (1998:94), (2006:153).

¹¹⁶ On this counterexample cf. Newall (2011:74).

¹¹⁷ This version approaches what Hyman (2000, 2006) has in mind, even if he does not defend it explicitly.

¹¹⁸ Hyman himself (2000, 2006) adds a further parameter of similarity: the *relative occlusion size*, which is a function of the relative size of objects in their relative distance from an observer's eyes. In utterly different ways, Neander (1987), Sartwell (1991), Sachs-Hombach (2003) and Abell (2009) precisely appeal to disjunctions of similarity respects.

¹¹⁹ Cf. Lopes (2005:32).

¹²⁰ Cf. Lopes (2005:17-8).

¹²¹ Cf. Lopes (2005:35).

¹²² Abell (2009) is the paradigmatic example of such a position. In his very similar theory, Blumson (2009a) does not explicitly appeal to a disjunction of respects. Yet, since he believes that there is no

chance for an objective resemblance theorist to appeal to a single respect of resemblance (see immediately below), he most likely shares Abell's convictions on this point.

¹²³ As Abell (2009:184-6) explicitly maintains.

¹²⁴ A fortiori, I part company with an approach in the 'objective resemblance'-camp that we have already seen (cf. fn.104) holding that something depicts something else iff the former represents the latter in virtue of the former resembling the latter.

¹²⁵ For an attempt at moving in this direction, cf. Gibson's (1971, 1979) idea that a picture depicts its subject only if the former shares with the latter a certain amount of information consisting in the pictures' 'freezing' the same optical invariants its subject displays. For this interpretation of Gibson's idea cf. Blinder (1986). In accordance with a suggestion of Davies (2006:123), syncretism develops this idea by appealing to similarity in grouping properties between the picture and its subject. See chaps. VI-VIII.

¹²⁶ Cf. Blumson (2009a:147). The other counterexample Blumson mobilizes, that of self-referential expression-tokens, is more controversial not because it is *recherché*, as he says (*ib.*), but because it involves the expression "this phrase", which is ambiguous in its referring either to an expression's type or to an expression's token. If the former is the case, one may wonder whether it may resemble a type, which is an abstract entity. If the latter is the case, then it is shorthand for (something like) "the phrase this token is a token of", which no longer resembles the token's expression itself. More in general, even if one allows for self-representations that also resemble themselves, it is true that one does not have self-depictions *eo ipso*. Yet once one agrees with Goodman that depictions are not reflexive, such self-representations are not counterexamples to an objective resemblance theory of depiction. For their reflexivity *qua* self-representations prevails on their reflexivity *qua* self-resemblers. Images that appear to be self-depictions, such as the ones discussed by Walton (1990:117-21), may well be self-representations that are not self-depictions, especially when they are cases of so-called impossible pictures such as Saul Steenberg's *Drawing Table*, which Walton talks about. On impossible pictures cf. chap. VIII. Definitely, pictures whose mere title represents themselves, such as the one hypothesized by Newall (2003:386-7), are at most simply self-representations, not self-depictions.

¹²⁷ Indeed, as Blumson himself acknowledges for some onomatopoeic words: "some [such] words continue to represent what they do because of what they resemble, and they are rightly included [in the category of depictions]" (2009a:155).

¹²⁸ Blumson would most likely agree with this, for he says that the respect of similarity must be somehow *intended* to be such by the picture's maker. Cf. (2009a:155). Yet, as I will show in chap. VI, I take that the selection of the relevant respect of similarity is not the outcome of an intention, but rather the outcome of a *perception*, i.e., the perception of those properties of the picture's vehicle that are responsible for the emergence of the picture's figurative content in it.

¹²⁹ Cf. Blumson (2009a:155).

¹³⁰ This formulation most likely approaches Hyman's own position: cf. (2000:25-6,31-2,44), (2006:80,95). To be sure, Hyman further adds that the subject that is one of the *relata* of the resemblance relation so conceived is not the individual the picture is about – the *external* subject, as he calls it – but rather an item *qua* represented by the picture – the *internal* subject, as he calls it (cf. (2000:24-5); for essentially the same idea, see also (2006:66-7)). Yet such a complication raises further problems. First of all, if there were such an internal subject, it would not be merely *represented as* having a certain respect, it would straightforwardly have it. For example, in the case of a caricature of Berlusconi, the internal subject would be *a distorted Berlusconi*, i.e., an item possessing the very same occlusion shape the caricature itself possesses. Moreover, postulating such a subject amounts to violating again Lopes' aforementioned independence constraint. For one would have to know that the picture is about one such subject (a distorted Berlusconi in the previous example) in order to know what the picture is like.

¹³¹ On this point, see again Novitz (1975:151) and Abell (2009:212).

¹³² Hyman himself seems to be aware of this drawback. Cf. (2000:37).

¹³³ Cf. Descartes (1985:I,165-6). On this point see Hyman (1989:11, chap.2).

¹³⁴ Cf. Budd (2004:386,389).

¹³⁵ Cf. Peacocke (1987:387).

¹³⁶ Cf. e.g. Blinder (1986:20).

¹³⁷ Another problem for the subjective resemblance theory in this version is that it appeals to *possible* experiences, which may be non-existent items just as the merely possible objects some pictures are about. Yet since this only seems to be a problem in ontology – whether one may accept in the overall domain of what there is merely possible (subjective) events as well as merely possible objects – I leave it aside.

¹³⁸ Cf. Peacocke (1987:397).

¹³⁹ Cf. Peacocke (1987:387-8).

¹⁴⁰ Peacocke would like to have it both ways, for in a different case he says that a picture presents a certain subject even if it is just a representation of another subject. Cf. Peacocke (1987:389). Yet it would be more coherent for him to say that, even if the representation in question is not a *pictorial* representation of its actual subject, it still has a certain figurative value, as with accidental images.

¹⁴¹ Cf. Budd (2004:390).

¹⁴² Cf. Peacocke (1987:385). In the anti-representationalist framework Peacocke (1983) defends, these properties are not reduced to, nor do they even supervene on the experience's representational properties (for more on this, see immediately below).

¹⁴³ For Hyman (2003:691-2), the two formulations are equivalent. Budd (2004:384) implicitly agrees.

¹⁴⁴ Cf. Hopkins (1998:50-1). Even an appeal to merely possible experiences of the picture's subject is avoided by such a version insofar as this version no longer postulates a comparison between experiences.

¹⁴⁵ As Mulligan (1988:142) originally underlined as to seeing-as experiences in general.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. Hopkins (1998:chap. 6), (2003a:158), (2006:153). As to caricatures, which bring about the very same problem, Hopkins seems to prefer another line of defense, according to which we experience a caricature as similar in outline shape to its intuitive subject insofar as that caricature is so similar to a distortion of that subject – cf. (1998:104). For he holds that when faced with one such picture, one does not experience it as similar in outline shape to its subject (on this see Kulvicki 2013:63). Yet this line of defense seems to lead Hopkins back to Peacocke’s problems. Like Peacocke and any perceptualist, Hopkins opts for loose minimalism. In his account, the intentionality of a picture is given as follows: the fact that a picture is experienced as resembling in outline shape its subject is explained by the fact that the picture is causally/intentionally related (in the appropriate way) to such a subject (cf. (1998:77), (2006:151)). Yet, as with Peacocke, this move seems to entail that in the caricature’s case the picture either implausibly does not have the subject it is supposed to have, but rather its distortion, or it unfortunately is not a picture, but a mere representation, of its supposed subject. As Kulvicki (2013:65) remarks, Hopkins indeed seems to be committed to the idea that there is a separation between what one can see in a caricature and its representational content. Finally, Hopkins tries to avoid this unsatisfying dilemma by reinterpreting his treatment of caricatures in the way I have implicitly ascribed him in the text: as for Budd, a caricature is a distorted representation of its subject, a misrepresentation of it, yet it is such insofar as it is experienced as similar in outline shape to such a subject although it is not so similar – cf. (2006:152).

¹⁴⁷ Some people also wonder whether such an experience provides necessary conditions of figurativity – cf. Lopes (2006:167-8). Yet since the alleged counterexample this critique mobilizes to this effect is a case of emerging seeing-in and the experience of similarity in outline shape is what according to Hopkins seeing-in consists in (see right below in the text), I think that the alleged counterexample is no real counterexample at all.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. Hyman (2003:692). See also his (2006:81).

¹⁴⁹ Cf. Hopkins (1998:126-7).

¹⁵⁰ This example is given in Kennedy (1993:29); the objection is in Lopes (2006:165-6).

¹⁵¹ This objection is again in Lopes (2006:167).

¹⁵² Cf. Hopkins (2003a:151,154), (2006:153). This may be the reason as to why he prefers to say in the case of caricatures that we do not experience them as similar in outline shape to their intended subjects, but we experience them as similar to distortions of such subjects. Cf. fn.146.

¹⁵³ In the text quoted in the previous footnote, Hopkins seems to respectively appeal to all such possibilities. For this interpretation of Hopkins, see also Kulvicki (2013:64-5).

¹⁵⁴ Cf. Hopkins (1998:15).

¹⁵⁵ Lopes presents this objection by considering the famous example of the picture of a dalmatian. Cf. Lopes (2005:41), (2006:168).

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- ¹⁵⁶ Cf. Hopkins (1998:77), (2006:151).
- ¹⁵⁷ Cf. Hopkins (1998:59-60), Hyman (2006:78-9), (2012a:143).
- ¹⁵⁸ Cf. Wollheim (1980², 1987, 1988, 2003a, 2003b). For some precursors of Wollheim's ideas, cf. Jonas (1962:204,211), Pirenne (1970), Polanyi (1970), Gibson (1979).
- ¹⁵⁹ Cf. Wollheim (1980²:218), (1987:47-8).
- ¹⁶⁰ Cf. Wollheim (1987:47-8).
- ¹⁶¹ Cf. Wollheim (1980²:205-7), (2003a:5-6)..
- ¹⁶² For similar examples in Wollheim, cf. (1980²:206), (2003a:6).
- ¹⁶³ Cf. Wollheim (1980²:205).
- ¹⁶⁴ Cf. Wollheim (1980²:208).
- ¹⁶⁵ For both problems (with different examples), cf. Hyman (2006:137-8).
- ¹⁶⁶ Such a case is already recalled in Hopkins (1998:15).
- ¹⁶⁷ This is indeed one of the experiences Mulligan (1988) labels 'aha'-experiences.
- ¹⁶⁸ On this, see Prinz (1993).
- ¹⁶⁹ Cf. Wollheim (1998:221).
- ¹⁷⁰ Cf. Wollheim (1980²:213). For the notions of weak and strong twofoldness, cf. Lopes (1996:47-51).
- ¹⁷¹ Cf. Wollheim (1987:46).
- ¹⁷² Cf. Hopkins (2008:150).
- ¹⁷³ Cf. Gombrich (1960:5).
- ¹⁷⁴ Cf. Gombrich (1960). At this time I will not enter the controversy of whether this attribution is correct. As we will immediately see, there are several versions of the illusionistic theory; it is not clear whether Gombrich defended any of them, or rather if by dealing with illusions he had a different point in mind. On this see Bantinaki (2007).
- ¹⁷⁵ This strengthening of the theory is often taken to be Gombrich's own theory: cf. Schier (1986:10), Gilman (1991:183), Newall (2011:24).
- ¹⁷⁶ For this criticism see Maynard (1972:243), Newall (2011:24).
- ¹⁷⁷ For this refinement cf. Newall (2011:42). Sometimes this refinement is also attributed to Gombrich himself: cf. Rollins (2001:391).
- ¹⁷⁸ Over and above twofoldness, Wollheim adds two further features that tell seeing-in from seeing-as: complexity of content (a seeing-in experience may be both about individuals and about states of affairs) and non-localization (there is no part of the picture in which something is seen). Cf. Wollheim (1980²:210-3).
- ¹⁷⁹ This point was anticipated by Wollheim himself: (1974:280), (1980²:214). Cf. Pautz (1987:230), Maynard (1994:156). According to Bantinaki (2007:274-6), Gombrich was well aware of the disanalogy between the two cases, for he used the 'duck-rabbit'- case in order to rather maintain that we are so

immersed in *one* interpretation of such a figure that we utterly leave aside the fact that it may also be differently interpretable.

¹⁸⁰ For this idea cf. Levinson (1998:229), McGinn (2005:42-3), Newall (2011:30-2); I have defended it already in my Voltolini (2012a,b). In point of fact, such a proposal may have suited Wollheim himself. For he himself originally held that pictorial experience is a seeing-as experience of the picture's vehicle as the picture's subject. Cf. (1964:26), (1980²:17).

¹⁸¹ Hopkins implicitly recognizes this in saying: "unless my experience represented a surface as before me, I would take myself to be confronted not with a picture, but with a gesturing man" (2010a:152).

¹⁸² Experiences of genuine *trompe-l'oeils* are also cases of such a kind, insofar as in them one merely mistakes the relevant *trompe-l'oeil* for a certain individual. More on such cases later.

¹⁸³ This idea is adumbrated in Howell (1974:87,104-6). As we will see in the next three chapters, these claims have to be refined. For it will turn out that, unlike the corresponding state of mistaking something for something else that one may well have in isolation, the recognitional fold both conceptualizes the item involved in its content and has a perceptual mode not colored by a feeling of the presence of such an item.

¹⁸⁴ This admittedly complex perceptual situation may explain why one may also describe a Wollheimian pictorial perception in the abbreviated terms of seeing the picture's vehicle as a picture of another item, as it happens sometimes throughout this book.

¹⁸⁵ Cf. Chasid (2014). The thesis is already adumbrated in Spinicci (2012b:146-7).

¹⁸⁶ Such a difference would remain even if, by endorsing a representationalist approach to experience, one interpreted the indeterminacy of the relevant experience as a kind of indeterminacy of its content, as e.g. Dretske (1995) and Tye (1995) independently do and Chasid himself (2014) is ready to accept.

¹⁸⁷ Cf. Lopes (1996:49).

¹⁸⁸ Cf. Wollheim (1987:62).

¹⁸⁹ This distinction between *trompe-l'oeils* not recognized as such and *trompe-l'oeils* recognized as such that takes only the latter to be genuine pictures is already in Feagin (1998). For Hyman (2003:680), *trompe-l'oeils* do not constitute real counterexamples to the seeing-in theory, for one may hold that the picture's perceiver is aware of the picture's vehicle although she does not attend to it. I think that this answer is appropriate with different kinds of putative counterexamples, i.e., naturalistic pictures and holograms. See below in the text.

¹⁹⁰ Cf. e.g. Hopkins (2004).

¹⁹¹ Cf. Lopes (2005:25).

¹⁹² This point has been anticipated by Dilworth (2005b:70) in his assessment of Newall's (2003:381) between content-bearing and non content-bearing features of a picture.

¹⁹³ Cf. Lopes (2005:41-2).

¹⁹⁴ Cf. Lopes (1996:3).

¹⁹⁵ Cf. Lopes (2005:41-2).

¹⁹⁶ Note moreover that in the case of the picture of horses it is improper to describe contours as subjective. For insofar as such contours are *grouping* properties of the picture, properties the picture's elements have of being arranged in a certain way, though mind-dependent they are objective properties of the picture. For more on grouping properties and their fundamental role in depiction, see chaps. V-VI.

¹⁹⁷ Cf. Levinson (2005).

¹⁹⁸ Cf. Newall (2011:26-30).

¹⁹⁹ For this clarification cf. Nanay (2010b), who however says that in such cases there is seeing-in, though unexperienced: see later.

²⁰⁰ As Nanay himself underlines (2011b:473).

²⁰¹ Moreover, in such cases there are further design properties that allow for strong twofoldness for they are actually attended to; namely, the contour properties of the vehicle I have already pointed out when speaking of 'aspect-dawning'- pictures. For more on this see my Voltolini (2014b).

²⁰² Wollheim took naturalistic pictures as being qualified by the fact that there is a reciprocity between the two folds of the seeing-in experiences surrounding them (cf. 1987:73). What he most likely had in mind by this was that in the case of naturalistic pictures, there is a balance between a visual ascription of features to the item constituting the figurative content of a picture and a visual grasping of the features of the picture's vehicle, so that neither is visually dominant over the other.

²⁰³ Cf. Lopes (1996:49,137-56,174-7).

²⁰⁴ Cf. Marshall & Halligan (1988).

²⁰⁵ For this non-experiential account of seeing-in, cf. Nanay (2010b). Nanay adds that there is still a difference between conscious and unconscious seeing-in as far as their respective implementation is concerned. Both conscious and unconscious seeing-in mobilize 'dorsal' perception in the individuation of the picture's vehicle, yet conscious seeing-in mobilizes 'ventral' perception in the individuation both of the picture's vehicle and of the item that picture presents, whereas unconscious seeing-in mobilizes 'ventral' perception only in the individuation of the item the relevant picture presents (for the notions of 'dorsal' and 'ventral' perception, see later in the text). Yet I am not convinced that there is such a difference, insofar as not only the merely visible surface properties of the picture's vehicle but also at least some of its design properties are unconsciously grasped. Cf. Voltolini (2014b).

²⁰⁶ Cf. Lopes (2005:24,30). For more on this see also Hopkins (2012:650).

²⁰⁷ The recognition theory is originally defended by Schier (1986). For this qualification, cf. Lopes, e.g. (2003:641), (2006:169).

²⁰⁸ In (2006:169), Lopes actually provides a definition of depiction in terms of both necessary and *sufficient* conditions in order to take into account not only the figurativity, but also the intentionality factor of a depiction, i.e., what makes a depiction to be a picture *of* something. Not surprisingly, the

further condition appeals to causal-intentional factors: “the satisfaction of [the figurativity condition] is a consequence of a causal relation of the right kind between [an object] O and [a picture] P”.

²⁰⁹ On these points cf. e.g. Matthen (2005:300-304,310). Matthen calls the first component the *descriptive* component. Yet in order to set aside the question of whether or not the object identification such a component provides is conceptual, I shall call it the *identification* component. For similar reasons, Nanay straightforwardly calls it ‘ventral perception’ (while the latter component is referred to as the ‘dorsal’ perception). Cf. (2010b:200).

²¹⁰ Cf. again Matthen (2005:304-313).

²¹¹ For this remark, see also Newall (2011:42).

²¹² In saying this, I remain neutral as to whether all such experiences are typologically the same, as conjunctivists about genuine perceptions, illusory perceptions and hallucinations (cf. e.g. Lowe 2008) maintain.

²¹³ For such an objection, cf. Hyman (2006:139).

²¹⁴ For more on this see also Kulvicki (2013:34).

²¹⁵ Cf. Martin (2012:338-44).

²¹⁶ Cf. Martin (2012:336).

²¹⁷ By saying that *visibilia* are phenomenological entities, Martin does not want to claim that they are private. Indeed, he also ascribes a spatiotemporal location to them – cf. (2012:341). Yet then it is hard to see how they can fail to straightforwardly be physical entities.

²¹⁸ I say “inter alia” for in a recognitional fold in general one does not merely capture the appearances of the presented things, but a more articulated general content. On this see the following chapters.

²¹⁹ As to mirrors and shadows as eliciting seeing-in experiences, see also Niederée & Heyer (2003:85).

²²⁰ On the notion of seeing-through, cf. Walton (1984).

²²¹ Cf. Walton (1984:252).

²²² Cf. e.g. Lopes (1996:50), Hopkins (2010a:167-70), Walton (1990:300-1), (2002:33).

²²³ Cf. Hyman (2006:139-42), (2012b:112).

²²⁴ Budd (2012) objects to Hyman that one can provide a non-circular analysis of seeing-in, e.g. along the lines suggested by Walton (1990) (on Walton’s account, see the following chapter). Hyman somehow acknowledges this point in replying to Budd that Walton’s analysis is simply wrong. Cf. (2012b:114).

²²⁵ Cf. Margolis (2005:46).

²²⁶ In his (1972), Sartre bit the bullet: for him, there is no principled difference between a seeing-in experience grounded in the picture’s vehicle and an analogous imaginative experience merely prompted by the vision of that vehicle.

²²⁷ Cf. Wollheim, e.g. (1991:404-5), (2003a:3), (2003b:146).

²²⁸ Cf. Casati (2010). For a similar criticism (seeing-in does have a perceptual character and yet does not provide a sufficient condition of figurativity), cf. Schier (1986:17-8).

²²⁹ Cf. Wollheim (1980²:206), (1987:48).

²³⁰ Cf. Wollheim (2003a:8).

²³¹ So-called intentionalists, or representationalists, about mental states believe that both factors are always relevant. For them, all mental states indeed are intentional states, i.e., states about something or assessable as to their truth or falsity. On intentionalism cf. e.g. Crane (2001). I believe that intentionalism is wrong – cf. my Voltolini (2013c), yet for the time being I intend to remain neutral on this issue.

²³² Relationalists, or naïve realists, about perception often say that, in its being related to an actually existent entity, perception has no content. Cf. Martin, e.g. (2002). But this is most likely a terminological issue, for when speaking of content relationalists usually mean non object-involving content. This leaves open the possibility for them to hold both that a perception is related to the thing it is about and that it has a singular content constituted out of that very thing. On this cf. also Lowe (2008:107).

²³³ For this terminology cf. Wollheim (1964:27). Incidentally, speaking of a pictorial dimension for the picture's subject as distinct from the physical dimension in which the picture's vehicle is located helps one understand why Wollheim says that (unlike seeing-as) seeing-in is non-localized. Cf. Wollheim (1980²:211-2). For this amounts to saying that there is no physical part of the picture's vehicle where one can locate what is seen in such a vehicle.

²³⁴ Cf. Hyman (2006:133-6).

²³⁵ As Cutting & Massironi already underlined. Cf. (1998:151-8).

²³⁶ Spinicci agrees with Hyman that stick figures provide no background for the characters they present, yet he remarks that they present an apparent depth insofar as one can single out figure-background relationship even as far as those characters are concerned. Cf. (2012a:98-100). Yet, as we will see in the following chapter, there is more than a mere apparent depth that even in such cases a picture's vehicle presents. For if there were only this apparent depth, one would merely grasp that vehicle as being enriched by certain grouping properties, instead of both grasping that vehicle in that way (in the configurational fold of seeing-in) as well as the item it presents (in the recognitional fold of seeing-in).

²³⁷ Incidentally, Wollheim himself admits that we can see *x* as a *y* doing such and such. His complaint is simply that, while we can see in *x* that *y* is doing such and such, we cannot see *x* as that *y* is doing such and such. Cf. Wollheim (1980²:210). Yet once the recognitional fold is taken as a (knowingly illusory) seeing-as state, it may well be the case that first, what one generically describes as the fact that we see in *x* that *y* is doing such and such can be more precisely redescribed by saying that while we see *x*, we also see *x* as *y* doing such and such, and second, the latter way of saying involves the description – “*y* doing such and such” – of a non-present scene.

²³⁸ Cf. Hyman (2006:136).

²³⁹ One may find evidence of this way of putting things in Wollheim's text. For example: "its appropriate experience [...] is the experience of seeing in the pictorial surface that which the picture is of" (1998:221).

²⁴⁰ Cf. Wollheim (1980²:206).

²⁴¹ Clearly enough, where to draw the line between perceptually discernible and perceptually indiscernible properties is a matter of debate. I cannot get into such a debate here. For more on it, cf. e.g. Siegel (2010).

²⁴² See previous footnote. For this problem cf. Bantinaki (2008).

²⁴³ In his appealing to a distinction between *bare bones content* and *fleshed out content*, Haugeland (1998) is the main representative of such a conception. Although his understanding of bare bones content is not as radical as that of Haugeland, Kulvicki (2006) shares with Haugeland the idea that bare bones content is rather thin.

²⁴⁴ Lopes (1996) already distinguishes between *content recognition* and *subject recognition*. Hopkins (1998) precisely tells what he calls the *seeing-in content* from the *depictive content* of a picture. Cf. also Dilworth's (2005a) distinction between *aspectual content* and *intentional content* of a picture.

²⁴⁵ In this respect, the difference between figurative and pictorial content can hardly be *equated* with Frege's (1980³) linguistic difference between the sense and the reference of a representation, where the sense of a representation is a general notion while the reference of a representation is an individual entity. (A similar position may also be ascribed to Husserl (2006) in his distinction between the object and the subject of a picture: cf. Wiesing (2010:33-6).) For this comparison between figurative and pictorial content on the one hand and sense and reference on the other, see Hyman (2013:141-2).

²⁴⁶ Cf. Budd (2008), Chasid (2014).

²⁴⁷ This is the phenomenon Niederée & Heyer (2003:91) label "cue segregation". Nanay (2014) holds that this problem may be circumvented by saying that the folds respectively represent their contents consciously and unconsciously. Yet as he himself admits this does not hold true of all pictorial perceptions.

²⁴⁸ For this problem, cf. Hopkins (2012:652).

²⁴⁹ If one rejects the claim that seeing-in is the distinctive pictorial experience, by following Ziff (1951) one may say that in a pictorial experience one literally ascribes flatness and non-literally ascribes depth to one and the same thing, the picture's vehicle. Yet it is not clear how to cash out the non-literality of the second ascription, as Kulvicki (2013:17-8) rightly remarks.

²⁵⁰ Cf. Hopkins (1998), (2010a:168). In (2010a:169), Hopkins maintains that Walton also defends a unitary account of seeing-in that definitely does not rely on experienced resemblances. Perhaps this is the outcome of Walton's position, once it is shown that such a position cannot characterize the two folds as different in mode. See immediately below.

²⁵¹ Cf. Kulvicki (2009).

²⁵² Newall (2011) defends a similar idea. Hopkins (2012) labels this position Transparency Gombricheanism (TG).

²⁵³ A structurally similar way out is to say that in a seeing-in experience one experiences something as having a sort of extraordinary property that fuses the incompatible properties which are apparently mobilized by the content of that experience. This proposal is traceable back to Polanyi (1970:230). Yet rather than a solution this seems to be a restatement of the problem. For it is not clear what one such extraordinary property, which sounds like an impossible one, really is.

²⁵⁴ Cf. Pylyshyn (2003:95).

²⁵⁵ As Ziff originally grasped, by remarking that the seen-in scene is not seen as something we could walk around beyond the picture's vehicle. Cf. (1951:473).

²⁵⁶ As Ziff (1951:475) remarked. In the case of a picture that contains visually protruding elements, the distance in question is even identical with the distance from the seer at which a certain item of the seen-in scene is seen as standing in that very space *behind* other items of that scene. Hopkins (2012) says that TG fails to account for the fact that, unlike the picture's vehicle, the seen-in scene is seen under the very same perspective. This is a correct criticism, yet it only holds true for the cases in which the picture's vehicle is a two-dimensional item.

²⁵⁷ Cf. Walton (1990:344,349), (2002:32), (2008:137).

²⁵⁸ Cf. Walton (1990:39-41).

²⁵⁹ Cf. Walton (2008:137-8).

²⁶⁰ Cf. Walton (1990:293), (2002:32), (2008:137).

²⁶¹ Cf. Walton (2008:137).

²⁶² Cf. Walton (1990:344,349).

²⁶³ Not accidentally, in order to eschew the problem reported in the text, Walton suggests that, unlike a non-pictorial representation, a pictorial representation is surrounded by a *single* experience, thereby espousing (as Hopkins envisaged: cf. fn.250) a unitary rather than a divisive approach to seeing-in: "a viewer who sees a horse in a picture [...] is best regarded not as seeing the picture and *also* engaging in this spontaneous imagining, but as enjoying a *single* experience that is both perceptual and imaginative, her perception of the picture is colored by the imagining ... a perceptual experience that is also an imaginative one (2008:137-8)". Yet it is not clear how his appeal to make-believe may allow him to so defend the unitary approach. For a more detailed critique of Walton's position, see my Voltolini (2013a).

²⁶⁴ To be sure, appealing to visualized perceptions is not the only way of accounting for make-believe perceptions. One might rather hold that make-believe in general involves two different representations, a representation of the real world in a real context and a representation of the make-believe world in an imaginary context, plus a meta-representational awareness of the difference between such representations. (For such an account of make-believe, cf. Meini & Voltolini 2010). As applied to the present case, it

would follow that a make-believe perception of a picture involves both a perception in a real context of the picture's vehicle and a perception in an imaginary context of the picture's subject. To be sure, this move no longer appeals to a difference in mode between the theoretical counterparts of Wollheim's folds. For a perception in an imaginary context is still a perception, not another kind of state. It rather appeals to a difference in content between the two perceptions involved. Yet, by appealing to a context shift, this move does not fall again into the problem that the two folds have incompatible determinations. For the perceptions in question have their utterly different contents in their respective different contexts. However, one may wonder again whether appealing to a perception in an *imaginary* context may account for the idea that the apprehension of the picture's subject *actually* has a perceptual flavor. Moreover, such a move may also be applied to make-believe with respect to non-pictorial representations, for also in such cases one perceives the representation's vehicle in a real context and perceives its subject in an imaginary context. Thus, this move cannot again account for the figurativity of pictorial representations.

²⁶⁵ Cf. Hopkins (2012:652-3). Hopkins specifies that in order for this move to have a chance to overcome the original problem raised by the divisive approach, it must conceive the design properties of a picture's vehicle one captures in design-seeing (the configurational fold taken as having an enriched content) as generative of the scene that is captured in the recognitional fold. Yet for him this forces the original problem to arise one step down the road, as we will immediately see.

²⁶⁶ Cf. Hopkins (2012: 652-3).

²⁶⁷ Zeimbekis (2014) suggests that the emergence in cases like these of 'aspect dawning'- pictures of a volumetric perception of the figure is incompatible with the mere non-volumetric perception of such a picture. This is correct, yet it does not revitalize Gombrich's vacillation theory of pictorial experience against Wollheim's theory of seeing-in. For, as I said, it simply shows that the configurational fold of seeing-in is no longer the same as the mere perception of the picture's vehicle taken in isolation. In Wollheim's theory, what are taken to be simultaneous are the configurational fold (so conceived) and the recognitional fold of seeing-in, not the pictorial perception as a whole (i.e., seeing-in) and the mere perception of the picture's vehicle taken in isolation, which is instead relinquished once seeing-in arises.

²⁶⁸ Suitably interpreted, this was originally suggested by Wittgenstein in the following passages: "The color in the visual impression corresponds to the color of the object (this blotting paper looks pink to me, and is pink) — the shape in the visual impression to the shape of the object (it looks rectangular to me, and is rectangular) — but what I perceive in the lighting up of an aspect is not a property of the object, but an internal relation between it and other objects." (2009⁴:II§247); "I suddenly see the solution of a puzzle-picture. Where there were previously branches, now there is a human figure. My visual impression has changed, and now I recognize that it has not only shape and color, but also a quite particular 'organization'. (2009⁴:II§131).

²⁶⁹ Cf. Hopkins (2012:653-4). Wiesing (2010:35) tries to find a ‘Husserlian’ way out of this problem by ascribing to the scene that amounts to the one given in the recognitional fold of seeing-in a mere “artificial presence”, that is, a phenomenological presence that is compatible with its real absence. Yet apart from the fact that this ascription seems to make that content a rather problematic phenomenological entity, it again seems to merely restate the problem rather than solving it. Indeed, Wiesing says that the visibility of the ‘artificially present’ scene is an unexplicable datum. Cf. (2010:37). Briscoe (2014) ameliorates things by claiming that the relationship holding between the light reflected from the pictorial surface and the artificially present scene is a fact to be explained by neurologists and psychologists. Yet this way of putting things appeals to a merely causal explanation of a contingent fact. If other similar contingencies were to arise, we would be forced to rank as figurative images things we are not ready to consider as such.

²⁷⁰ Cf. Noë (2012).

²⁷¹ The actual implementation of seeing-in may show why the item seen in it is given as present (in the content of the recognitional fold) but not felt as present (in the overall mode of such a fold). As we saw in the previous chapter, in such an implementation, while the ‘ventral’ system is involved both with respect to the picture’s vehicle and to what can be seen in it, the ‘dorsal’ system is involved only with respect to the picture’s vehicle. In seeing a picture as a picture, one can indeed plan to tactilely grasp the picture’s vehicle, but not what one can see in it. Cf. also Matthen (2005), Lopes (2010), Dokic (2012).

²⁷² *Pace* Spinicci (2012b:146-7), therefore, such an impression does not sideline the claim that a pictorial experience has a seeing-in character.

²⁷³ In chap. VII, I will show that, unlike the configurational fold, the recognitional fold may also be affected by the so-called perceptual constancy of what is seen in a picture, i.e., the fact that what is seen in a picture is always given under the same perspective. Wollheim (1980²:215-6) appealed to this phenomenon in order to show that pictorial experience is a seeing-in experience. Cf. my Voltolini (2014a). Yet since this phenomenon regards only two-dimensional but not three-dimensional pictures, for the time being I will remain silent with regard to it. A further qualification of the mode of the recognitional fold may come from the fact that its content is conceptual; see chap. VI and the following footnotes.

²⁷⁴ As we will see in the next chapter, even seeing the picture’s vehicle as a certain seen-in item has an altered content, once that perceptual state becomes the recognitional fold of a twofold experience. For what is an illusory perception with a non-conceptual content once taken in isolation, has a conceptual content when taken as a seeing-in fold.

²⁷⁵ That is, provided that one does not defend a disjunctivist position on perceptual matters according to which veridical perceptions on the one hand and non-veridical perceptions on the other hand count as different states. Cf. e.g. Martin (2002). Moreover, the fact that when taken in isolation an illusory

perception has a non-conceptual content that becomes conceptual once that perception is embedded as a seeing-in fold definitely prompts a further difference in character between the former and the latter perception. See the next chapter.

²⁷⁶ I say “at least” for I believe that all seeing-in is inflected. Cf. my Voltolini (2014b).

²⁷⁷ On this risk, cf. Hopkins (2010a:156).

²⁷⁸ Cf. Hopkins (2010a:158). In (2010b:194), Nanay gives a slightly different account of inflection, according to which inflected properties are relational properties, “design-scene properties” as he calls them; namely, properties that cannot be fully characterized without reference to both the picture’s design and the seen-in item. For Hopkins (2010a:160fn.7), the properties he himself takes to be inflected are not those captured by Nanay’s account. For, as Nanay himself underlines, design-scene properties have to do with what in a picture’s vehicle is responsible for the *emergence* of a certain item in that vehicle. Yet properties responsible for emergence belong to inflected properties as defined by Hopkins. For more on this see my Voltolini (2014b).

²⁷⁹ Cf. Hopkins (2010a:158).

²⁸⁰ Cf. Hopkins (2010a:175).

²⁸¹ Cf. Hopkins (2010a:176).

²⁸² Cf. Hopkins (2010a:159-60).

²⁸³ Cf. Hopkins (2010a:177-8).

²⁸⁴ For the whole problem, cf. Hopkins (2010a:172-9).

²⁸⁵ Cf. Hopkins (2010a:176).

²⁸⁶ Cf. Wollheim (2003b:143).

²⁸⁷ In (2003:323-4) Newall presents other similar cases in which, he says, the nesting picture presents more features of the nested picture than the content-bearing properties the former shares with the latter.

²⁸⁸ In reporting Masrour’s (2008) position on the matter, Kriegel (2011:157-8) wonders whether the perception of the mere picture’s vehicle before the grasping of its further design properties has an intentional nature. Clearly it has such a nature. But it is a different intentional state from the state that, by also grasping those further properties, turns out to be the configurational fold of a seeing-in state. Moreover, *pace* Kriegel (2011:235-6) again, the grasping of this enriched content is perceptual, not cognitive. As is clearly shown not only by the grasping of ‘aspect-dawning’- pictures (one undergoes a *phenomenal* change once one grasps the pictorial aspect of what one is facing), but also by the grasping of perceptually ambiguous pictures, in which one endorses a phenomenal switch precisely insofar as one respectively focalizes different further design properties of the only picture’s vehicle. As a matter of fact, one has to consider such a grasping as perceptual if one wishes to tell these cases apart from cases in which one has a mere grasp of the meaning of a bunch of sentences or of a mathematical proof. For such cases as involving *intellectual* rather than sensory Gestalts, cf. Chudnoff (2013).

²⁸⁹ In the analytic tradition in aesthetics, one can already find an appeal to Gestalt properties in Sibley (1965:140) and Walton (1970:341).

²⁹⁰ This double treatment of the ‘double-cross’ figure was originally suggested by Wittgenstein (2009⁴:II xi, § 215, 218). It may be well the case that sometimes not only the 3-D reading is to be preferred to the 2-D reading or *vice versa*, but also that such a preference has to be brought back to psychological laws (as Chudnoff (2013:176) maintains). Finally, it may be well the case that famous optical illusions such as the Ebbinghaus illusion (perhaps even the afore-mentioned Müller-Lyer illusion) owe their illusory character to a pictorial 3-D reading rather than to a 2-D reading, as generally claimed. Such a hypothesis is clearly maintained by Doherty *et al.* (2010) and already adumbrated in McCauley & Henrich (2006).

²⁹¹ On perceptually ambiguous three-dimensional ‘duck-rabbit’- pictures, see also Gregory (1997:207). To be sure, as to a three-dimensional object endowed with a figurative value the alleged perceptual ambiguity does not have to affect the third dimension. Yet it may affect such a dimension. This is clearly shown by a three-dimensional version of the so-called Necker cube. Unlike its corresponding two-dimensional version, which is just another case of a perceptually ambiguous *picture*, this version can be straightforwardly taken either as a cube with a certain *protruding* face and a certain *receding* face or as a cube with *another* protruding face and *another* receding face. On this case cf. Bruno *et al.* (2007).

²⁹² Cf. Hopkins (2012:653). To be sure, Hopkins does not share the ‘divisive’ approach to seeing-in (cf. the previous chapter).

²⁹³ Cf. Macpherson (2006:97-102), Nickel (2007:285-99).

²⁹⁴ As both Macpherson (2006) and Nickel (2007) acknowledge.

²⁹⁵ *Pace* Macpherson (2006:103). For a similar way out see also Raftopoulos (2011:508).

²⁹⁶ For this option cf. Peacocke (1983:24-6).

²⁹⁷ On this point, see also Jagnow (2011:136). This is not to say that perspectives cannot be in their turn accounted for in objective terms as well. As you will remember from chap. III, Hopkins (1998) precisely accounts for perspectives in terms of outline shapes, mind-dependent yet objective properties. See later.

²⁹⁸ *Pace* Spinicci (2012a:93), anamorphosis does not rule out a resemblance between the picture’s vehicle and what is seen in it. For insofar as we still grasp grouping properties in the part of the vehicle undergoing anamorphosis and such properties are roughly the same as those possessed by what is seen in that part, this resemblance is still there.

²⁹⁹ For other similar examples, cf. Kanizsa (1979).

³⁰⁰ For this way of putting things, cf. Raftopoulos (2009, 2011).

³⁰¹ For this distinction between different kinds of mind-dependent properties, see also Newall (2011:67); for other criticisms to view-centered frame points, cf. also Jagnow (2011:336-7), Macpherson (2006:91,107-8).

³⁰² This is Jagnow’s proposal. Cf. (2011:337-8).

³⁰³ Cf. Jagnow (*ib.*).

³⁰⁴ Various people have underlined this point, from Chisholm (1993), who interprets Wittgenstein in this respect, all the way to Pylyshyn (2003), Nanay (2010a, 2011a), Orlandi (2011:317), and Raftopoulos (2009, 2011:498-507).

³⁰⁵ In this respect, my reconstruction of seeing-in opts for taking the seeing-in state as *strongly* twofold, for it involves attention to grouping properties. This does not mean, however, that other design properties of the vehicle, such as its shapes, must be attended to as well. One is aware of such properties, yet one may fail to attend to them, as mere weak twofoldness requires. In this sense, seeing-in is well compatible with a shift of attention regarding properties grasped in the respective folds, as many sympathizers of seeing-in have maintained (cf. e.g. Pirenne (1970), Polanyi (1970), Niederée-Heyer (2003)). Nor does my reconstruction entail that seeing-in must be something one is phenomenally aware of, for attention to grouping properties may also occur subpersonally. For more on this see my Voltolini (2014b).

³⁰⁶ As instead Raftopoulos (2009, 2011:498-507) seems to believe. Cf. also Orlandi (2011:317).

³⁰⁷ I here assume that the ‘tiles’- figure can be taken as a merely two-dimensional figure. In point of fact, since the phenomenal switch it prompts is naturally described as involving different figure-ground segmentations, it is more natural to rank this figure with the cases of ambiguous figures involving different three-dimensional interpretations, i.e., perceptually ambiguous pictures.

³⁰⁸ Cf. Jagnow (2011:342), who polemizes against an interpretation *à la* Raftopoulos (2009, 2011) of Nanay’s (2010a) position on this matter – cf. again (2011:338-40) – that Nanay (2011a) however rejects.

³⁰⁹ As is the case with a picture which is apparently only of G.W. Bush but that actually is also a picture of dark naked bodies scattered all around a lighter multicolored surface: cf. <http://hypehaus.com/artists/blogartists/jonathan-yeo1.jpg>. As Gombrich (1960:249) originally envisaged, all pictures are potentially ambiguous.

³¹⁰ *Pace* Dokic (2012:403), who conceives grouping properties as higher-properties of objects (appearance properties, he says) that however exist independently of being perceived. For Dokic, moreover, appearance properties supervene on “low-level sensory facts” (*ib.*) Yet even if one were to accept that grouping properties exist unperceived, it is unclear to me how they could so supervene. For, as we have seen, even if one fixes the colors and the forms of an object its elements may have different groupings. This point was already captured by Sibley when, while speaking of grouping properties as properties ‘emerging’ on forms and colors, he refrained from endorsing the thesis that the former supervene on them (by thus appealing to a mere generic dependence of grouping properties on the latter properties). Cf. (1965:140,152).

³¹¹ Such an attention does not even have to be conscious, for it may work also subpersonally. See on this my Voltolini (2014b).

³¹² So, there is a grain of truth in Searle's (1992:209) saying that syntax is an observer-relative notion, if this simply means that syntactic properties are objective yet also weakly mind-dependent.

³¹³ For this idea, see Thomasson (1999); see also Ferraris (2012). In my Voltolini (2006) I have reprised and expanded it as regards the entities Thomasson herself focuses on, i.e., fictional entities.

³¹⁴ *Pace* Budd (2008:203), it is precisely because the configurational fold involves a visual awareness of depth that the recognitional fold involves such an awareness as well.

³¹⁵ One may well say that it is this sort of dependence that explains why a pictorial experience does not provide a proper impression of stereopsis concerning its subject, unlike a face-to-face experience of it. On this point cf. Vishwanath (2014).

³¹⁶ Hermerén (1969:34-8) labels it '*as-if*'- *seeing-as*.

³¹⁷ For such labelings, cf. my Voltolini (2012a,b).

³¹⁸ On Saint Paul's taking Christ as an image of the divinity, see *The Letter to Hebrews* 1.3. As to the notion of *acheiropoieton* (not man-made) in Saint Paul, cf. e.g. the *Second Letter to the Corinthians*, 5.1. As to the claim that Saint Paul counted Christ's resurrected body as a non man-made image of the divinity, cf. Belting (2005). I thank Federico Vercellone for having attracted my attention to this book.

³¹⁹ As Kulvicki (2006:59, 2013:102) rather holds.

³²⁰ Cf. Wollheim (2003a:10).

³²¹ Cf. Raftopoulos (2009:132ff.).

³²² Cf. e.g. Pylyshyn (2003), Raftopoulos (2009).

³²³ As Raftopoulos (2009:272-4) claims on behalf of Marr (1980).

³²⁴ Cf. Raftopoulos (2009:156-62).

³²⁵ For this characterization of strong cognitive penetrability, cf. Macpherson (2012). In Macpherson's terms, *weak* cognitive penetrability is instead the claim that *either* the phenomenal character *or* the content of an experience are permeable by states of their subjects' cognitive systems, hence by the concepts that constitute the content of such states.

³²⁶ *Pace* e.g. Fodor (2007).

³²⁷ Cf. again Raftopoulos (2009, 2011) and Macpherson herself (2006:95).

³²⁸ Cf. Gopnik – Rosati (2001). See also Leopold – Logothetis (1999).

³²⁹ Perhaps such evidence is not so decisive, as Macpherson claims (2006:95fn.35).

³³⁰ Zeimbekis (2014) also holds that picture perception is cognitively penetrable. Yet he seems to confine such penetrability to cases in which a cognitive effort is required in order for one to grasp the pictorial character of what one is facing. Yet in my account such cases, which are shown by the perception of 'aspect-dawning'- pictures, are just the paradigmatic cases of pictorial perception. For me, pictorial perception is rather involved in the same way also with regards to cases in which no such effort is required; as, say, with naturalistic pictures. So, if the former cases involve cognitive penetrability, so do

the latter. Indeed, unlike Zeimbekis, for me cognitive penetrability is due to the recognitional fold of the pictorial perception, which is always mobilized as far as one such perception is at stake.

³³¹ To be sure, Wollheim (2003a:10-2) also thinks that conceptual seeing-in is flanked by a non-conceptual seeing-in that takes place when one simply sees *an individual* in a picture. Yet I think that Wollheim is wrong about this. For seeing-in always has a generic content, as I have tried to show.

³³² Dokic (2012:404) defends a similar thesis. However, he wishes to locate it in the context of a recognitional theory of depiction, not of a syncretistic one. For he says (*ib.*) that grasping certain appearances (roughly, grouping properties: cf. fn.310) in a picture is no illusion. I agree with him on that: the picture's vehicle really possesses certain grouping properties. Yet, as we have seen, the illusionist factor has to be located not in the configurational fold, but in the recognitional fold taken as the known illusion of seeing the picture's vehicle as a certain item, namely the item seen in the picture.

³³³ This squares with Newall's saying "for a picture to depict its subject matter as having a particular feature [...] it is necessary that part of it resembles a visually distinctive part of that feature" (2003:389).

³³⁴ Cf. e.g. Wollheim (1987:46), (2003b:141). On the idea that this is a serious limit of Wollheim's theory, see also Newall (2003:391).

³³⁵ This exploits a suggestion originally put forward by Gibson (1971, 1979) who on the one hand appealed to a version of the objective resemblance theory (see fn.125) and on the other hand remarked that grasping of pictures is a twofold visual state (see fn.158). On this cf. Blinder (1986). Moreover, this account of figurativity in terms of a seeing-in state along with resemblance in grouping properties matches the one Hyman (2012b:113) proposes in terms of recognizing an item and resemblance between that item and the relevant picture.

³³⁶ For Hopkins (2008), moving images mobilize *collapsed seeing-in*; when seeing an actor in a moving image on a screen, one ends up seeing in that image the character such an actor represents. I think that collapsed seeing-in is just an instance of a more general phenomenon of modulation that may take place even if there is no representational relation between the seen-in items involved. To go back to an already familiar example, I may well imagine a context in which Piero's fresco is taken as a picture of Michael Schumacher, even if there is no representational relation between St. Louis of Toulouse, who remains what the fresco is about in standard contexts, and the F1 pilot.

³³⁷ *Pace* Hopkins (1995:433).

³³⁸ Cf. e.g. Hopkins (2004:164).

³³⁹ Cf. e.g. Walton (2008:136).

³⁴⁰ Hopkins admits that as to depictive matters low reliefs are a complicated issue. Cf. (2010b:358).

³⁴¹ For Hopkins, low reliefs such as Lorenzo Ghiberti's panels on the Florence Baptistery are such that "any perspective in them depend[s] heavily on their engraved, and essentially pictorial, background. They seem [...] mixed media pieces, combining drawing on bronze with a sculpted foreground" (2004:163-4).

Hopkins defends this opinion for he is interested in denying sculptures any internal perspective (see later). Yet he might perhaps more simply claim that low reliefs have to be assimilated to pictures for they just allow *one* internal perspective. As he indeed seems to be disposed to say: cf. (2004:163). For more on this see soon below.

³⁴² Hopkins (2003b:273, 2010b:364) acknowledges that seeing-in occurs with sculptures as well. See also Niederée & Heyer (2003:98).

³⁴³ In this sense, though the scene in question is perceived, in the appropriate recognitional fold, as occurring in the same space that the sculpture's vehicle occupies, along with the gallery space that also surrounds the vehicle itself, since that fold is non-veridical, that scene occurs in such a space not in the actual, but in an unactual world. There is therefore no need for an imaginative act that somehow links together the figurative content of a sculpture and the gallery space, as Hopkins (2003b:282-3) postulates.

³⁴⁴ As Hopkins (2004) rightly underlines. Yet Hopkins' aim is to claim that the non-present scene a sculpture displays is given under *no* perspective. As we will soon see, this claim seems incorrect to me.

³⁴⁵ In the previous chapter, we saw that there are some external perspectives from which one cannot appropriately group the elements of a two-dimensional picture's vehicle. Thus, although there is no *specific* dependence of grouping properties of a two-dimensional picture's vehicle on external perspectives, there is a *generic* dependence of such properties on such perspectives: in order for the grouping properties of a two-dimensional pictorial vehicle to exist, that vehicle must be seen from *some* external perspective or other. On specific vs. generic dependence cf. e.g. Thomasson (1999).

³⁴⁶ Cf. Wollheim (1980²:215-6). Lopes (2005:36,48-9) disagrees that the phenomenon of perceptual constancy is sufficient for Wollheim's twofoldness. In (2014a) I have tried to reply that Wollheim is right on this point. Hopkins (2012) relies on this phenomenon to rule out what he calls Transparency Gombrichianism (cf. chap. V) as a legitimate interpretation of seeing-in.

³⁴⁷ On the perceptual character of such an expectation, cf. Noë (2005), Siegel (2005).

³⁴⁸ This proposal has some affinities with Roberto Casati's conception that the figurative value of a picture consists in its similarity to an *aspect* of the thing it depicts, where an aspect is a *visual object* – cf. Casati (1991:28,51). For a somewhat similar idea cf. Noë (2012:104-6). The main difference between syncretism and Casati's theory does not lie in the fact that, unlike a seen-in item, *qua* visual object an aspect is a mind-dependent entity. For a syncretist may say that a seen-in item from a certain perspective amounts to an aspect in Casati's sense. Rather, it lies in the fact that Casati's conception singles out no respect under which a picture may resemble an aspect, whereas the syncretist holds that there is one such respect and conceives it as being made by grouping properties.

³⁴⁹ In this respect, this perceptually ambiguous picture is more interesting than other such pictures that involve profiles, such as the Rubin's vase. For in these other cases what is seen in profile in one

perceptual reading of the picture (the faces in front of a background) has nothing to do with what is seen frontally in another perceptual reading of the picture (the vase in front of a background).

³⁵⁰ Cf. Hopkins (2004:162-3).

³⁵¹ Cf. Hopkins (2010b:370-2).

³⁵² For discoveries in perceiving two-dimensional pictures, cf. Walton (1990:307).

³⁵³ As Walton himself (2008:136) suggests. See also Niederée & Heyer (2003:98).

³⁵⁴ Incidentally, once perspectives are treated as outline shapes, it sounds improper to treat a picture that presents the items of a scene seen in it from apparently different internal perspectives as a perceptually ambiguous picture, as Gregory (2013:182-3) holds. An object has one and the same outline shape both whether the perceiver assumes a certain position with respect to it and whether it accordingly changes its position with respect to the perceiver. As a result, in one and the same scene an object can have a certain outline shape, for the scene perceiver has assumed a certain position with respect to it, while another structurally similar object has another outline shape, for it results as having turned its own position with respect to the perceiver. Yet as regards a picture what counts as whole is the *only* internal perspective from which the scene in which all such objects are differently placed is given to the perceiver. Perceptually ambiguous pictures are different things, namely items in which, according to the different groupings of their elements, different scenes (or sometimes even the same scene) under *different* internal perspectives are presented to the perceiver.

³⁵⁵ Cf. Hyman (2001:24-5), (2006:66).

³⁵⁶ Incidentally, this shows that *pace* Wiesing (2010:33-6) and Briscoe (2014), a theory of depiction appealing to objective resemblance does not have to merely maintain that such a resemblance (under the relevant respect, which for Wiesing may well be *Gestalten*, i.e., grouping properties: cf. Wiesing (2010:40fn.39)) obtains between what is seen in a picture and that picture's subject, but rather, it must maintain that such a resemblance obtains between a picture's vehicle and a picture's subject via the resemblance between that vehicle and what is seen in it. As I hinted at in chap. III.

³⁵⁷ I hold both claims. See my Voltolini (2006).

³⁵⁸ Obviously, a kind different from the one of the man that is seen, say, in Piero's fresco; for one thing, the two men are differently dressed.

³⁵⁹ I here follow a suggestion from Lamarque (2003:44fn.21).

³⁶⁰ Cf. on this also Novitz (1975:150-1), Abell (2009:212).

³⁶¹ The *locus classicus* for a defense of tactile pictures is Kennedy (1993).

³⁶² Cf. Lopes (1997).

³⁶³ Cf. Hopkins (2000).

³⁶⁴ Cf. Hopkins (2000:156-8), (2004:155-6).

³⁶⁵ Cf. again Kennedy (1993).

³⁶⁶ For the identification of three-dimensional items in raised-line drawings by blind people, cf. Kennedy (1974:150-4), (1993). Recently, new experiments seem to have confirmed that there are such identifications: cf. e.g. D'Angiulli et al. (1998), Kennedy & Bai (2002), Pawluk et al. (2011).

³⁶⁷ Cf. Hopkins (2000:154). See also Lopes (1998:430-1).

³⁶⁸ Cf. Hopkins (2004).

³⁶⁹ Cf. notoriously Frege (1980), (1980³).

³⁷⁰ As Lopes is well disposed to acknowledge. Cf. (1997:436-7).

³⁷¹ As Hopkins again underlines. Cf. (2000:157-9).

³⁷² Cf. Carter et al. (2008).

³⁷³ For problems for the blind in recognizing things in two-dimensional items that are perceptually ambiguous in the third dimension, cf. Kennedy & Domander (1974). For the idea that the blind are still able to master perceptually ambiguous two-dimensional pictures also as to figure-ground segmentation, cf. Shopland & Gregory (1964). The idea comes back in Kennedy (1993:259).

³⁷⁴ Touch seems to be sensible to the illusoriness of a perceptual ambiguity of a three-dimensional item along the third dimension. As we already know, in the corresponding visual case all groupings but one of a three-dimensional object are non-veridical. As Gregory (1970:42) somehow intuited.

³⁷⁵ I do not wish to deal at this time with the very famous Molineaux's question originally discussed by Locke (1975:146), i.e., the question of whether a congenitally blind person who recovered sight would visually recognize the very same three-dimensional shapes she recognized tactilely. Yet if groupings in the third dimension are the same both in the visual and in the tactile case and groupings already presuppose shape-graspings, there is room to answer that famous question affirmatively.

³⁷⁶ Cf. Carroll (1999:50). For the idea that musical portrayals are depictions cf. Walton (1998:136).

³⁷⁷ Cf. Von Ehrenfels (1988).

³⁷⁸ This primarily holds true of streams of notes. Cf. e.g. Denham & Winkler (2006), Pressnitzer & Hupé (2006), Moore & Gockel (2012). Yet not exclusively, for streams of phonemes can also be differently grouped: cf. Warren & Gregory (1958).

³⁷⁹ Theoretically speaking, if one defends a non-perceptualist approach to depiction, as semioticians do, it is easier to account for pictures in other sensory modalities; suffice it to say that such pictures display the right syntactic properties. In this sense, Kulvicki (2006:106-14), (2013:105) allows for auditory as well as tactile pictures. For a perceptualist, hence for a syncretist, matters are complicated by the fact that one has to perform a 'case by case' analysis of each sensory modality in order to see whether in such a modality there is something that prevents perceiving-in from arising, hence that ultimately prevents grouping properties from emerging.

³⁸⁰ Cf. Hopkins (1995), (1998), (2006).

³⁸¹ Cf. e.g. Fodor (2007).

³⁸² Cf. Hopkins, respectively (1995:427), (1998:27).

³⁸³ Granted, if the picture's subject is a merely possible object, then there is no true pictorial representation of it. For, as I said in the previous chapter, a merely possible object actually possesses just a few properties, none of which are perceptually, hence pictorially, relevant. Yet, given the possible sharing of its grouping properties (with respect to the relevant perspective(s)) with the vehicle of the picture depicting it, such a picture at least represents it as the type of object it would be if it existed.

³⁸⁴ Cf. Greenberg (2013:226-7). This idea is adumbrated in Gilman (1991:175).

³⁸⁵ Cf. Schier (1986). On this point see Kulvicki (2013:35,46).

³⁸⁶ If we want there to be pictures of merely possible objects, as a syncretist indeed wishes, here "could" must be understood as meaning not only nomological, but also metaphysical possibility. For a merely possible object is something that (metaphysically) might have been seen, although it is not actually seen – if we at least read "to see" in the existentially entailing sense dictating that in order for an object to be seen it must exist (at least temporally, in order to leave to some mind-dependent abstract entities such as fictional objects a chance to be actually seen). As we will immediately see in the next Section, this desideratum instead rules pictures of *impossible* entities out of the pictorial realm.

³⁸⁷ Husserl contrasted the notion of a free ideality with that of a *bound ideality*, i.e., of a mind-dependent abstract being. Cf. (1972:267). Social objects are typical examples of bound idealities: they would not exist if minds did not exist as well. Cf. Thomasson (1999), Ferraris (2012).

³⁸⁸ Cf. Pylyshyn (2003:463), Kulvicki (2006:150), Fodor (2007).

³⁸⁹ For this idea, cf. originally Sober (1976). As Grzankowski (2014) admits, this idea is independent of whether both figurative and pictorial content are propositional contents. One might say that there are cases of pictures that depict contradictions, as e.g. Saul Steinberg's *Untitled* whose content is that of a self-creating pictorial creator. I will assume for argument's sake that the painting in question represents such a content. Yet, one may instead say if this painting has a pictorial content, it is not *that* content, but rather that of a closed line joining or becoming a man.

³⁹⁰ As Sorensen (2002:343), who reports this example, immediately comments on it.

³⁹¹ One may find this idea in Gregory (1970), as well as in the theoretical comments that the Penroses themselves gave on the figure so named: cf. Penrose & Penrose (1958), Penrose (1991).

³⁹² By stressing the different reaction times four-month-old children employ in understanding the representation they are focusing on, some experiments in cognitive science show that even such children are already able to discriminate between pictures of possible objects and putative pictures of impossible objects. Cf. Shuwairi et al. (2007), Shuwairi (2010), Shuwairi & Johnson (2013). Perhaps this is true even of some animals: cf. Regolin et al. (2011). Yet this is *at most* what such experiments show; they do not show that such individuals discriminate between possible and impossible *pictures*.

³⁹³ Cf. again Pylyshyn (2003:95).

³⁹⁴ There are further cases in which, although by tentatively adding a grouping in the third dimension to the *complete* two-dimensional array that a figure exhibits one should fail to get a thorough three-dimensional perceptual reading of the figure, it seems that one's perceptual system disregards some traits of that two-dimensional array so as to successfully yield one such reading pretty much as in the ordinary cases of pictures whose subjects are possible. Figures for which such a situation holds are often called *likely figures*: cf. e.g. Huffman (1971), Kulpa (1987).

³⁹⁵ For this traditional approach, cf. e.g. Kennedy (1974), Young and Deregowski (1981), Cresswell (1983), Kulpa (1987), Malinas (1991).

³⁹⁶ This point escapes many people. For instance, Malinas (1991:282) holds that a picture has figuratively relevant parts consisting in regions of color points. Yet as we will immediately see, there are no figurative parts independent of the whole figurative value of a picture.

³⁹⁷ A suggestion that may come from Kulvicki (2006:176).

³⁹⁸ Notoriously Schier anticipated this point: "It is not always possible, in the case of an icon, to understand a given part independently of its place in the whole icon" (1986:66).

³⁹⁹ For more on this, see also Chudnoff (2013), although he puts things in terms of part-whole dependence of phenomenal character of the pictorial perceptions involved rather than in terms of part-whole dependence of the content of the recognitional fold of such perceptions, hence in terms of part-whole dependence of the figurative content of the relevant pictures.

⁴⁰⁰ To be sure, Malinas (1991:297) admits that the figurative partitioning of a picture fails to determine its pictorial content. Yet by so doing he only accounts for merely representationally ambiguous pictures, whose only figurative value, as we have seen, fails to determine its different pictorial content. Yet he does not account for perceptually ambiguous pictures, insofar as the vehicle of one such picture undergoes different figurative readings that prompt it to have different figurative parts. Malinas somehow acknowledges this point when he says (*ib.*) that a perceptually ambiguous picture exemplifies different visually relevant attributes. Yet he does not realize that such an acknowledgment would force him to revise his previous idea (cf. fn.396) that a picture has figuratively relevant parts insofar as it has regions determined by its color points.